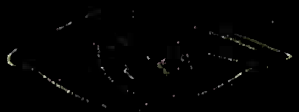

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The Illustrated
Encyclopedia
of Mythology, Religion
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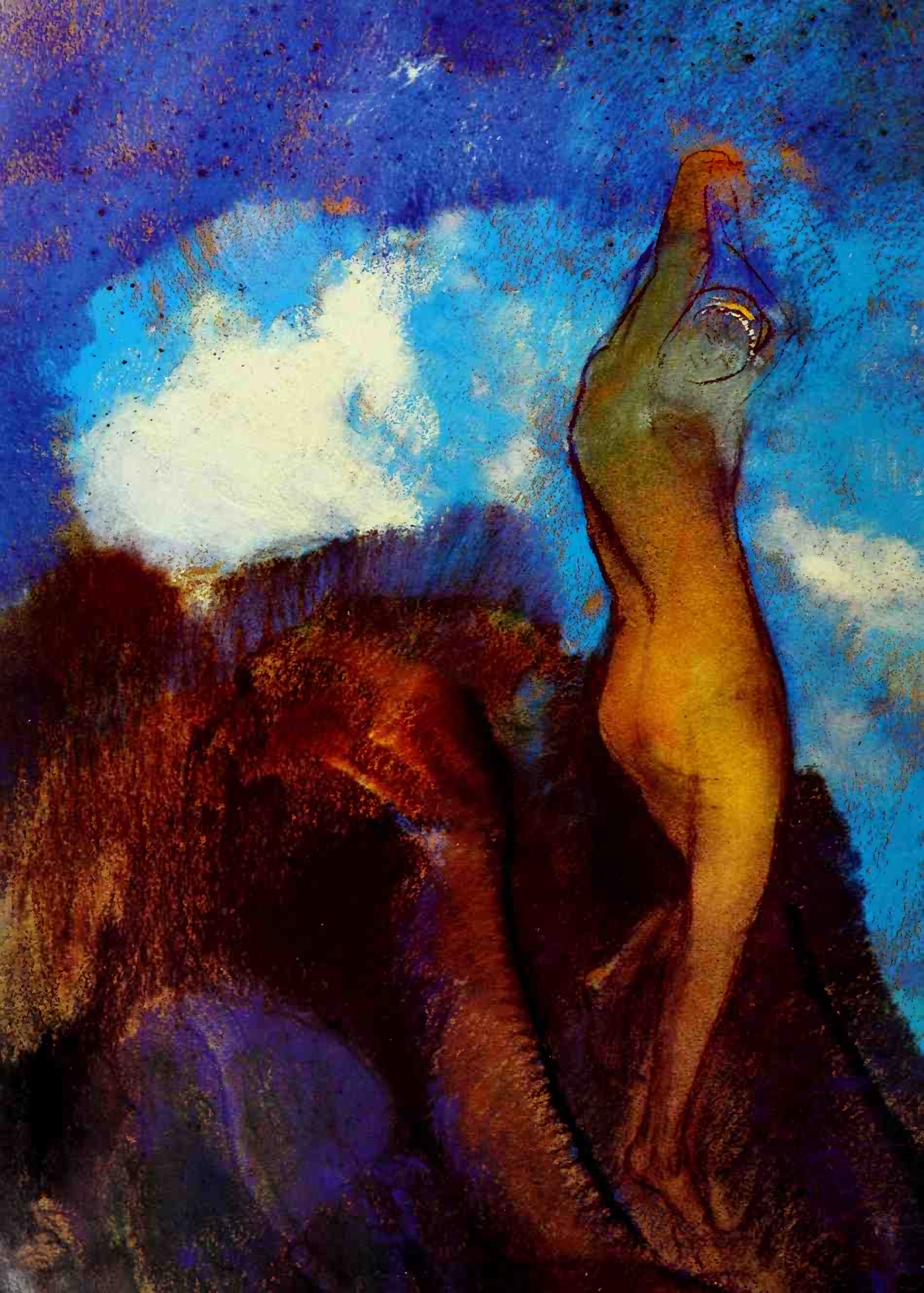

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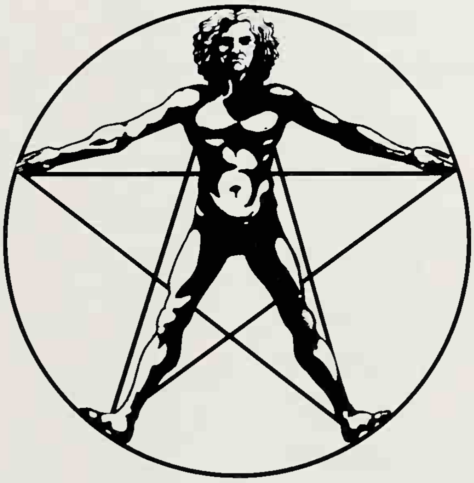

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As legendary hero, Theseus is represented as the slayer of the monstrous Minotaur and an adventurer who went down alive to Hades; as statesman, he appears as magnanimous champion of the oppressed and author of the Athenian constitution

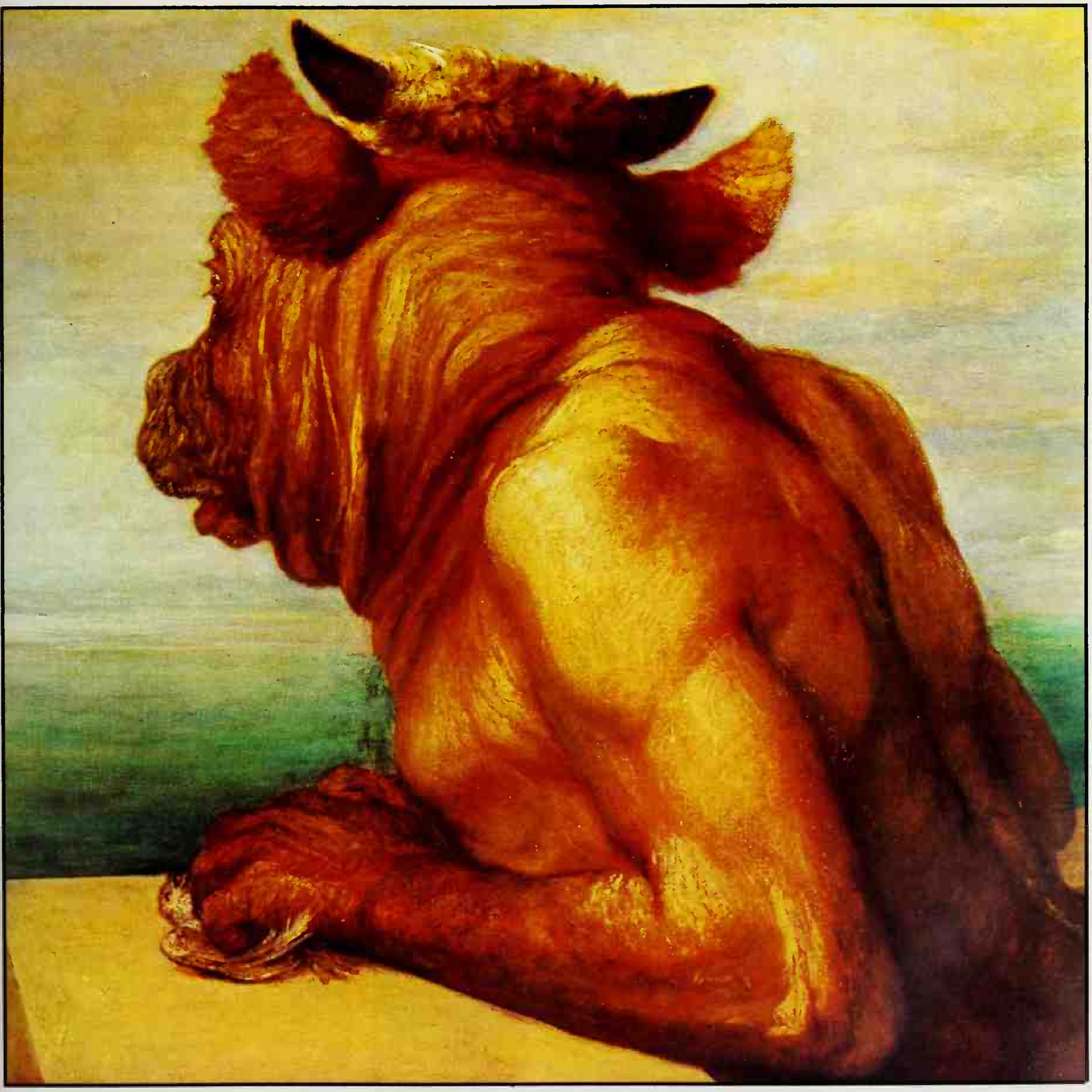
THESEUS

FOR THE ATHENIANS, as for us, Theseus was one of the more important heroes of Greek legend. But his full renown is of relatively late growth and peculiar to Attica. In fact Theseus has two aspects, which may be called the heroic and the political. In his heroic aspect he is an adventurer, subduer of monsters and chaser of women, after the fashion of Hercules, on whom he came to be modelled. In his political aspect he is a symbol of Athens and of Attic unity and power, indeed almost the only hero to become such an established symbol. He is treated for all purposes as a historical figure, even by sober writers of prose such as Aristotle. For this reason Plutarch brackets him with another legendary figure in his parallel *Lives* of Greeks and Romans, the founder of Rome, Romulus.

Though for ordinary Greeks legend was not separate from the history of earlier periods, in the case of Theseus this distinction must be made in some form. But it is not enough to argue simply that the heroic Theseus in his marvellous adventures is purely legendary, while the political Theseus is historical in the sense of being a man who really lived. For the political Theseus is a figure answering to other needs of the Attic imagination, but hardly less fictitious.

As a pan-Hellenic hero, Theseus is a relatively minor figure of the generation before the Trojan War, by no means of such stature as his contemporary Hercules or some other figures. He is connected in legend

The Minotaur, by G. F. Watts, suggests the pathos of the monster with a human body and a bull's head which in legend was kept in the labyrinth of Cnossus. With the help of Ariadne, daughter of the king of Crete, Theseus penetrated to the heart of the labyrinth, killed the Minotaur and made his way safely out again



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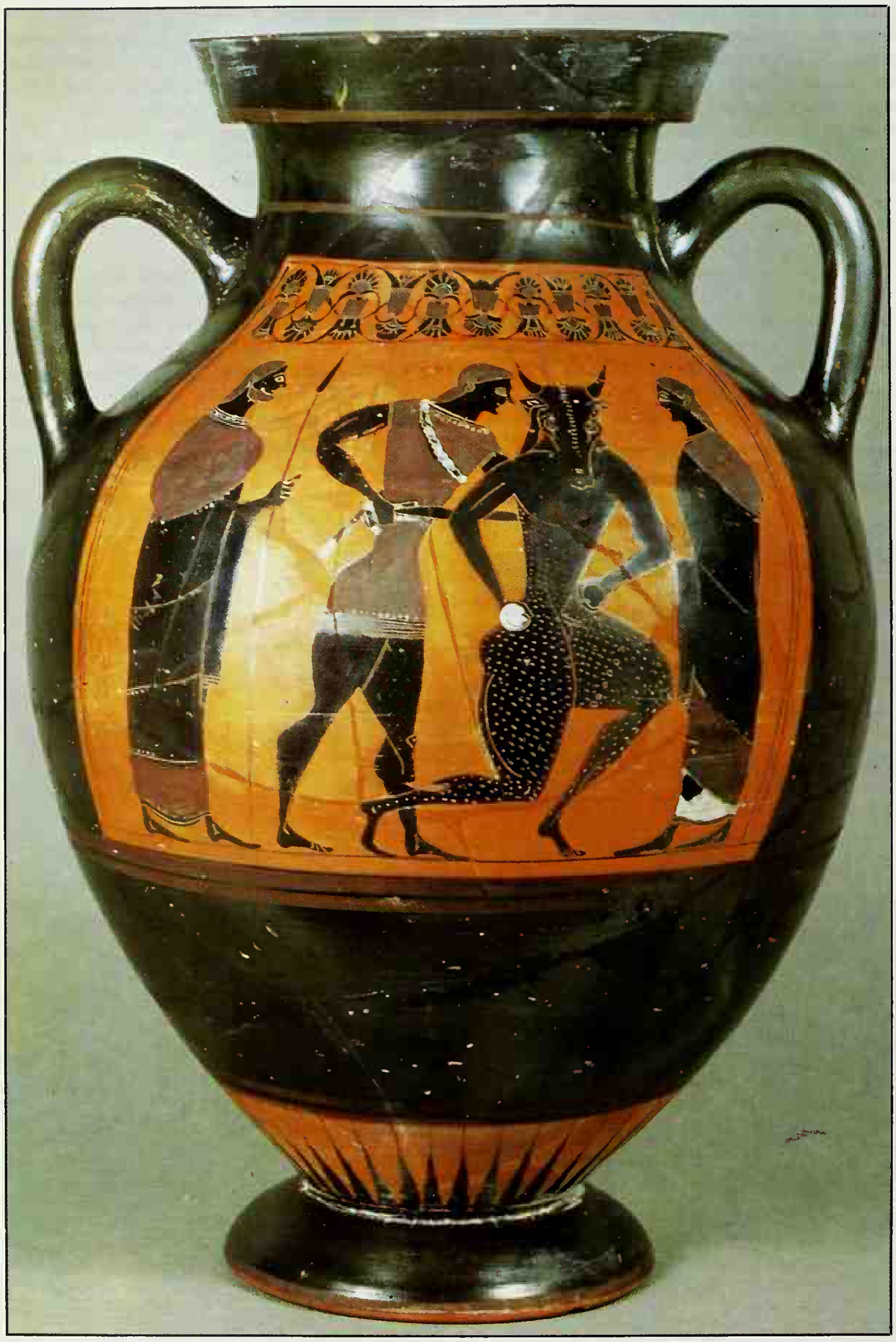


Michael Holford/British Museum

Bulls occur frequently in the history of Theseus, adventurer, ravisher of women and subduer of robbers and monsters: he slew the bull-headed Minotaur and subdued the wild bull of Marathon, and his son Hippolytus was killed by a bull from the sea *Left* Black-figured Greek vase of the 6th century BC, showing Theseus killing the Minotaur *Right* Heroic statue of Theseus in Hyde Park, London

with Troezen in the eastern Peloponnese but otherwise only with Attica, apart from the regions visited in his adventures and wanderings. For the Athenians of classical times he was not only the slayer of the Minotaur but also the author of a great political change, the *synoikismos*, that is to say the incorporation of all Attic communities into a single state ruled from Athens. In Attic legend he is also the pattern of the humane ruler who receives refugees and unfortunates, since Attica is never in his time ravaged by war.

From Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* and from two other compilers, Diodorus and Apollodorus, the outline of Theseus's life can be told. This is fortunate because there is no continuous and complete narrative in extant poetry, and even vanished epic poems of Attica such as the *Theseis* and the *Minyas*, which are later than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, do not seem from remaining fragments or from references in other writers to have told the whole story.

Sword beneath the Rock

Theseus was born in Troezen to Aethra, daughter of King Pittheus. In Athenian legend his father was King Aegeus of Athens, who returned to Athens before he was born, leaving under a hollow rock a sword and a pair of sandals, to be claimed by his son when he was big enough to raise the rock. In the Troezenian legend his father was the god Poseidon, who has an important part even in the Athenian legend. Having lifted the rock, Theseus then made his way to Athens.

However, he did not take the easy way by sea. He went by land, overcoming and killing dangerous robbers. Such were Periphetes, who attacked travellers with his club; Sinis who bent down pine trees, tied his victims to the tops and then let the trees spring up and apart to tear them limb from limb; Cercyon who forced men to wrestle with him until he killed them; Sciron who made travellers wash his feet on the top of a precipice so that he could kick them over; and Procrustes who forced them to fit one of his two beds, stretching out the shorter travellers to fit the longer bed and lopping the taller to fit the shorter. He also killed the ravaging sow of Crommyon. On being welcomed by Aegeus at Athens, he was very nearly poisoned by a drink offered by the witch Medea, then married to Aegeus; but Aegeus recognized him and cried out in time.

Aegeus then told Theseus of the affliction that the Athenians suffered at the hands of Minos of Crete. In vengeance for the killing of his son Androgeus in Attica, Minos every year carried off a band of Athenian youths and maidens to be given as victims to the Minotaur. This was a monster with a human body and a bull's head, usually said to have been kept in the labyrinth of Cnossus, a building designed in the form of an intricate maze, from which no one who entered could find his way out (see BULL; MAZE).

Food for the Minotaur

Theseus went voluntarily as one of the victims. When he arrived on Crete, he won the help of Ariadne, daughter of Minos. She gave him a ball of thread to unwind as he made his way into the labyrinth and follow so that he could find his way out again. He killed the Minotaur with his sword and then set off homeward in triumph with the captives, who were no longer needed as food for the Minotaur. He took Ariadne with him, but left her behind on the island of Dia off the coast near Cnossus or, as was more commonly said, on the island of Naxos, where the god Dionysus found her and took her as his wife.

As Theseus approached Athens, he forgot to change the black sail of the ship, a sign of mourning for the young Athenians, for a white one which would be a sign of deliverance. This he had promised to do if he came home safe. Aegeus, who was looking out for him, concluded that he had perished and hurled himself from a cliff.

Theseus thus became king of Athens. He had to fight rivals, the sons of Pallas, brother of Aegeus, but prevailed over them. He subdued the wild bull of Marathon, being sheltered on his way by an old peasant woman, Hecale. On an expedition with

Hercules and others to Themiscyra, where the Amazons lived on the south coast of the Black Sea (see AMAZONS) he carried off an Amazon, Antiope or, according to others, Hippolyta, and made her his wife; he later repudiated her and married Phaedra, daughter of Minos. The Amazons made war on him, invaded Attica and were with a great effort defeated. By his Amazon wife he had a son, Hippolytus. He also carried off Helen as a girl from Laconia, but she was brought home by force while he was away by her brothers Castor and Polydeuces.

Theseus was in Hades at the time with his friend Pirithous the Lapith, who was attempting to carry off Persephone, queen of the underworld. Pluto, however, cunningly persuaded Theseus and Pirithous to sit on seats, to which their flesh grew. Theseus was rescued by Hercules, who could not free Pirithous.

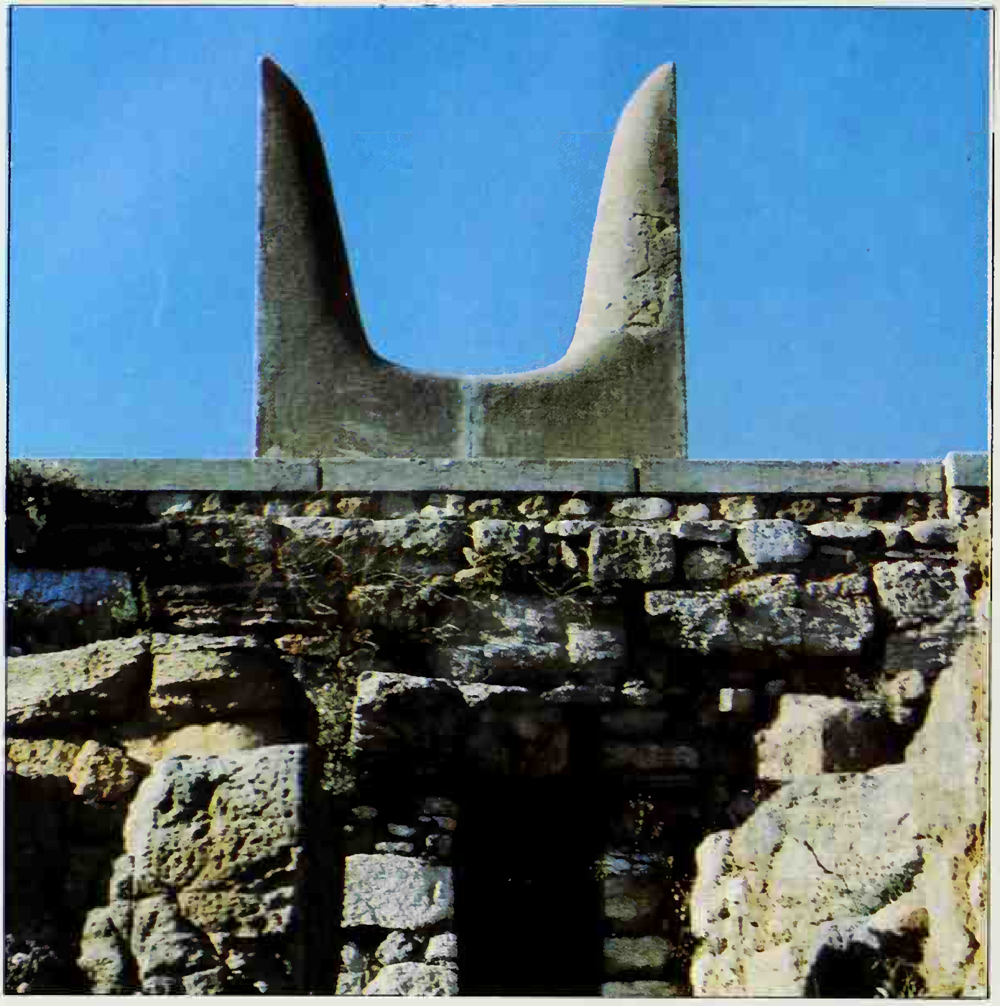
When Theseus eventually returned to Athens he found that the people were disaffected. He left for the island of Scyros, where the king Lycomedes, fearing that he meant to annex the island, treacherously thrust him over a cliff. A skeleton of great size, said to be his, was found on Scyros centuries later and carried to Athens by Cimon.

The adventures given in this framework appear here and there in surviving poetry, including some celebrated plays, which introduce something of his other aspect of statesman. Within extant poetry the earliest mention of Theseus is in a speech by Nestor in the *Iliad* (book 1). Nestor compares the warriors at Troy to their disadvantage with the earlier generation which included Pirithous and Theseus, son of Aegeus. 'They were like the immortals, the mightiest of men, who fought the mightiest of enemies, the beast-men of the hills.' The reference is to the centaurs whom Pirithous and his Lapithae subdued with the help of Theseus. In the *Odyssey* (book 11) there is mention of the ghost of Ariadne in Hades 'whom Theseus wished to bring from Crete to Athens but who was slain by Artemis on Dia by the witness of Dionysus': a puzzling passage. The *Odyssey* also relates that Odysseus, after seeing the phantom of Hercules, also hoped to see the ghosts of Theseus and Pirithous. The expedition of the two heroes to Hades must have been known to Homer.

According to Hesiod as reported in Athenaeus and Plutarch, Theseus abandoned Ariadne because he took a fancy to the maidens Hippe and Aegle. A damaged papyrus contains a fragment of a Hesiodic poem *The Descent of Pirithous*, in which the ghost of Theseus in Hades tells the ghost of Meleager how he and Pirithous came down to carry off Persephone. Meleager apparently hears the story with disgust.

In the remains of the Epic Cycle, poems of the same type as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but later and inferior, there is an occasional allusion to Theseus. In the *Nostoi* (Homeward Journeys of the Heroes from Troy) it is said that the love of Antiope for Theseus led her to betray Themiscyra to him and Hercules. In the *Cypria* Theseus is said to have carried off Helen and to have kept her

Jeffrey Craig



Spectrum Colour Library

The 'Horns of Minos' rise from the ruins of Cnossus, relics of the bull cult of ancient Crete: the legend of Theseus as national hero of Athens, who challenged the authority of Crete and founded Athenian greatness, seems to preserve memories of a time when Attica was dominated by Crete

until she was rescued by her brothers, the Dioscuri.

Among the lyric poets Alcman, as reported by Pausanias, tells how the Dioscuri, retrieving Helen, took Athens while Theseus was away and captured his mother Aethra. Stesichorus says that Helen was pregnant at the time of her rescue, and gave birth at Argos to an infant which she handed over to her sister Clytemnestra, before she herself married Menelaus. Pindar tells much the same story, explaining that Theseus kept Helen because he wished to become brother-in-law of the Dioscuri.

Palace under the Sea

But the most celebrated treatment of Theseus in lyric is found in two poems of Bacchylides. In *Dithyramb* 18, Aegeus is presented in conversation with a chorus about the approach of a remarkable stranger coming from Troezen. Aegeus has heard that he has killed Sinis and the other robbers and the sow of Crommyon. Two men are accompanying him; he wears a sword, a Laconian helmet, a red tunic and a woollen Thessalian cloak. His hair is flame-coloured and he darts from his eyes a red flame like the earth-fire of Lemnos. He is in the flower of his youth, his thoughts are of weapons and he is making for Athens. In *Dithyramb* 17, Theseus is shown sailing to Crete in the charge of Minos with the captive youths and maidens. He disputes with Minos, who is laying his hands on one of the maidens, claiming that if Minos is son of Zeus he himself is son of Poseidon. Zeus gives a clap of thunder as a sign for Minos, who throws his ring into the sea, challenging Theseus to dive for it. Theseus plunges in and reaches Poseidon's palace under the sea, where he is greeted by Amphitrite and presented with a bright garment. He comes up to the surface still dry, and the Nereids sing around him as he returns on board.

In Attic drama Theseus is prominent in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and in Euripides' *Mad Hercules*, *Hippolytus* and *Suppliants*. In the *Oedipus at Colonus* the aged and blind Oedipus, exiled from Thebes, is received in Attica at Colonus as a refugee with his two daughters. Theseus gives him protection and will not allow Creon of Thebes to carry off him or his daughters. In reward Oedipus reveals to Theseus alone where he must die in Attica and how, when he has disappeared beneath Attic earth, his presence will be a blessing to Attica. Only Theseus sees the manner of his death, and on oath reveals it to no one except his heirs. For this service Oedipus will hold Athens unscathed from any attack that may come from the Thebans who cast him out. Sophocles also wrote a *Phaedra*, which has perished; it dealt with the adulterous passion of Phaedra, wife of Theseus, for her stepson Hippolytus, but details are not known. It is believed that at the time of the action Theseus is supposed to be away.

In *Mad Hercules* Euripides relates how Hercules, after recovering from the fit of madness in which he killed his children, is brought to Attica from Thebes by Theseus and cleansed from the defilement of his deed. He also receives the promise of a place to dwell in recognition of his services to the Greeks, including Theseus. So too in the *Suppliants* Theseus supports the claim of Adrastus, the survivor among the chiefs who led the great Argive expedition against Thebes, to receive back the dead from the Thebans. If the Thebans will not yield, Theseus will make war on them, after putting the proposal to the Athenian people for their approval. He receives back the bodies of the Argive troops which the Athenians bury on Cythaeron, while those of the leaders are brought to Eleusis in Attica for burning before the bones and ashes are taken to Argos.

Deceived Husband

In the *Hippolytus*, Theseus has a very different part. There were two versions, of which the older, now lost, presented Phaedra in the style of Potiphar's wife, as perhaps Sophocles did, attempting to seduce Hippolytus and, when she failed, denouncing him for an attempt on her virtue. In the later one, which survives, Phaedra at first takes no action and conceals her passion until she is ill with it. Her old nurse induces her to confess it and unwisely reveals it to Hippolytus, making overtures in Phaedra's name but without her permission. Hippolytus recoils in horror and upbraids Phaedra for advances which she did not make. Phaedra hangs herself, leaving a written message for Theseus, accusing Hippolytus of rape. On his return Theseus believes the message and curses Hippolytus, driving him into exile. As Hippolytus drives along the shore, Poseidon, carrying out Theseus's curse, sends a bull from the sea to terrify his horses. They smash his chariot and drag him until he is nearly dead. The goddess Artemis then appears to tell Theseus the truth, and he is reconciled to his dying son. Theseus appears here only as a deceived, outraged and hasty husband and father. But in the other plays he appears as a humane ruler with a certain leaning toward democracy.

Episodes of Theseus's career are treated in Alexandrian poetry. Bion remarks that all lovers are happy, even Theseus when he went down into implacable Hades, because Pirithous was at his side. The remains of Callimachus's *Hecale* tell how the old peasant woman, Hecale, entertained Theseus on his way to capture the bull of Marathon, but was dead when he returned.

It has been argued that Theseus was originally a hero of the Ionian Greeks, who lived in the northern Peloponnese as well as in Attica and Euboea before the Dorian and West Greek invasion, so that his connection with Troezen, a Dorian city in classical times, goes back to the Mycenean period. Within Attica he seems originally to have belonged to the north-eastern region about

Marathon. The power of Minos over Attica could represent the power of rulers in Cnossus, who were already, in the 15th century BC, Greeks rather than Minoans, though Cnossus fell later to other Greeks from the mainland. Theseus's defeat of the robbers between Troezen and Athens may be a fairly late development of his story, not much earlier than the 6th century BC.

Friend of Democracy

The political Theseus no doubt has ancient roots in Attic tradition. But he appears in definite form first in Thucydides, and in plays of Euripides which apply forms of thought belonging to the 5th century BC to heroic legend. According to Thucydides, Attica before Theseus's reign was divided between separate communities which had their own authorities and took little common counsel or action except in face of external peril. The shrewd and energetic Theseus abolished these local assemblies and directed their members to meet in Athens, though the rest of the local inhabitants still lived separately. By the death of Theseus, Athens had become a large and powerful state, and the Athenians date their political unity from that time. Euripides in his *Suppliants* even makes Theseus claim to have set the people free to exercise equal votes and to elect annual officers, an equal part of these to be chosen by the poor. Isocrates *(Panathenaicus)*, Aristotle *(Politics* and *Constitution of Athens)* and Plutarch *(Life of Theseus)* regard Theseus's constitution as a historical creation, a mixture of various elements which was intended to be just and stable and was later gradually improved, until finally it was transformed for the worse into extreme democracy. Some oligarchs regarded Theseus's concessions to the people as the remote beginning of decay.

The truth symbolized by this treatment of Theseus, alone among epic heroes, is that Attic society, and even the Attic state, had a continuous existence since heroic or, historically, since Mycenean times. In other regions of Greece overrun by the Dorians the heroic or Mycenean society had been swept away and no such continuity could be claimed.

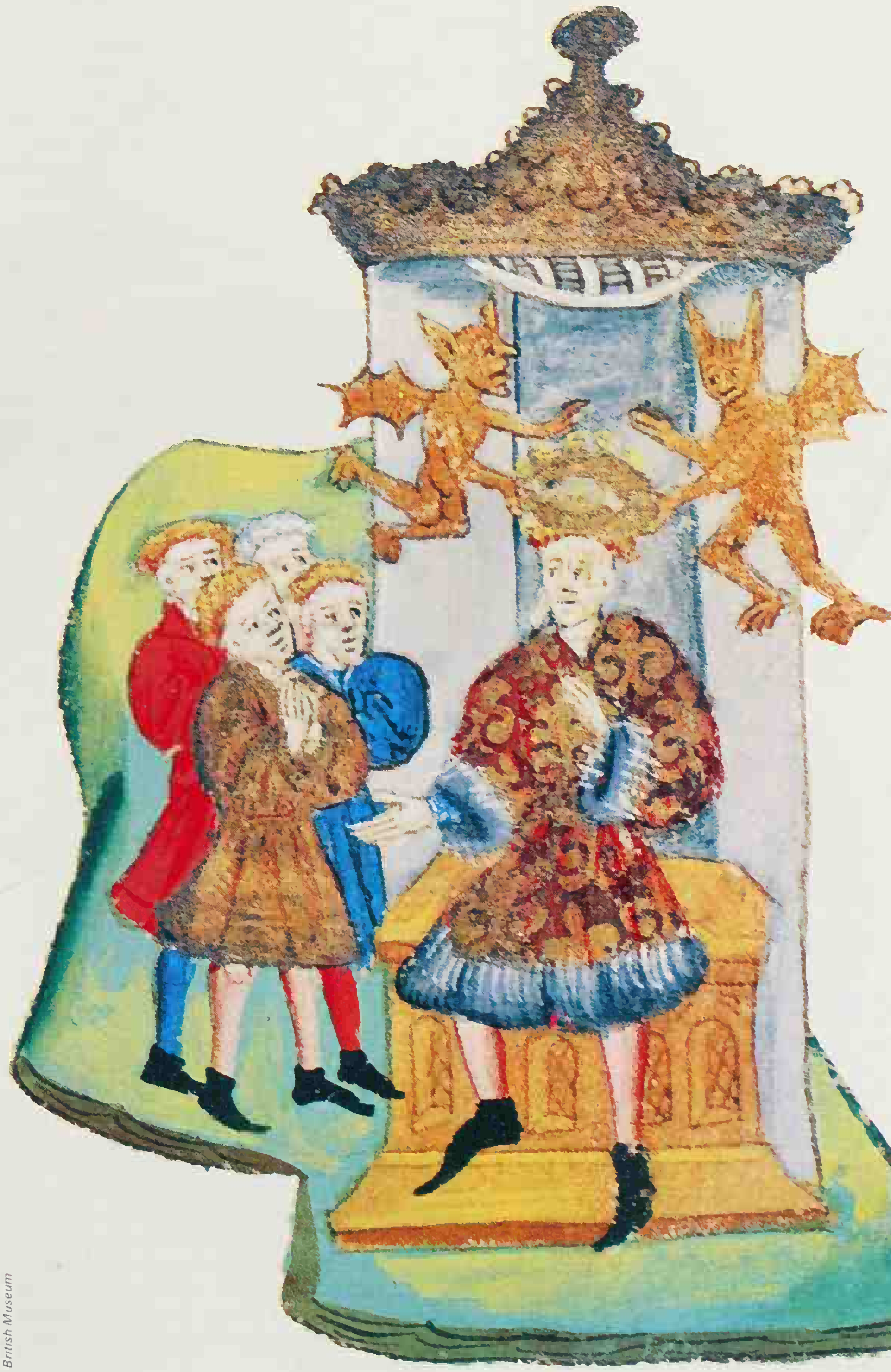
E. D. PHILLIPS

'The similarities between ancient theurgy and modern Spiritualism appear too numerous to be dismissed as pure coincidence' and 'it is tempting to conclude that they have a common psychological basis in actual experience'

THEURGY

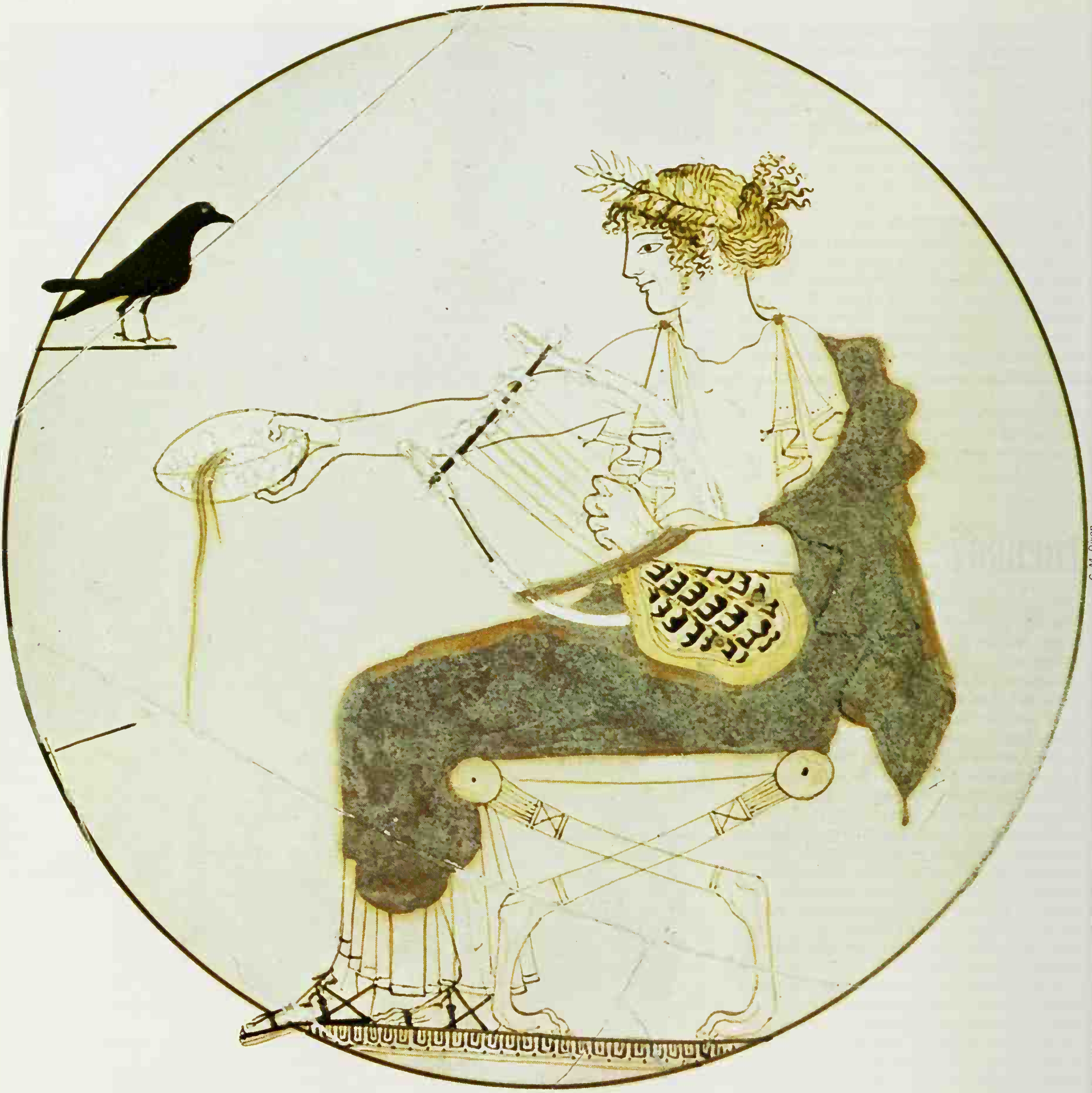
THEURGY WAS DEFINED by the Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus (5th century AD) as 'a power higher than all human wisdom and knowledge, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying effects of the ritual art, and in a word all the operations of divine possession.' It can be described more simply as magic applied to a religious purpose and resting on a supposed revelation of a religious character. Its practitioners called themselves 'theurgists' because they claimed not merely to talk about the gods as 'theologians' did, but to *act* upon them in a direct manner. Whereas vulgar magic used names and formulae of religious origin to profane ends, theurgy employed the methods of vulgar magic primarily (though, as we shall see, not exclusively) to a religious end, the salvation of the soul through contact with the Divine.

The revelation on which the theurgists based their practice was contained in a long poem in Greek hexameters, known as the *Chaldean Oracles*. It was the last Sacred Book of classical antiquity, published and perhaps composed by one Julianus (called 'the Chaldean' to distinguish him from the Emperor Julian) who lived in the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180 AD). Of his life and personality we know virtually nothing, but later tradition represents him as a potent magician who could cause men's souls to leave and re-enter the body and could produce apparitions of divine beings; the timely thunderstorm which saved the Roman army from destruction during Marcus's campaign against the Quadi in 173 AD was attributed by some to the magic arts of Julianus. His book is unfortunately lost, but numerous fragments of it and descriptions of the rituals founded on it are preserved by the



Medieval Christian view of Julian the Apostate, the patron of theurgy

British Museum



C. M. Dixon

later Neoplatonists. It seems to have been a strange amalgam of oriental religious ideas, derived ultimately from Iranian, Babylonian, Syrian, Egyptian and Jewish sources, with Greek concepts most of which go back in origin to Plato.

Theurgy had a chequered history. For a century after Julianus's time it seems to have created little stir. Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, never mentions it and is never described as a theurgist. Its heyday came later, when Plotinus's successors in the Greek-speaking Neoplatonic schools perceived in it a valuable ally in their long struggle against the rising power of Christianity. Iamblichus (*c* 250–325 AD) in particular exalted theurgy above philosophy, ritual above reason. 'It is not thought,' he says, 'that links the theurgists with the gods . . . Theurgic union is attained only by the efficacy of the unspeakable *acts* performed in the appropriate manner.' The last pagan Emperor, Julian 'the Apostate' (died 363), had complete faith in theurgy and elevated its practitioners to high office, but the subsequent Christian reaction drove it underground for a time. It re-emerged in the 5th century at Athens, where Proclus set the *Chaldean Oracles* beside the *Timaeus* of Plato as the two indispensable cornerstones of pagan orthodoxy and was himself an expert in theurgic magic (see NEOPLATONISM; PROCLUS). Under Justinian (527–565) it was finally prohibited along with other pagan practices, but the tradition of it lingered.

Animated Statues

From the many scattered sources the procedures of theurgy can be reconstructed in broad outline, though much remains uncertain. We can distinguish two main types – those which depended exclusively on the use of 'symbols' or 'tokens' and those which involved the employment of an entranced 'medium'. The former type seems to have been used mainly for the purpose of consecrating and 'animating' magical statues of deities in order to obtain oracles or other help from them. The 'symbols' were the animals, herbs, stones, scents and engraved characters appropriate to the particular god invoked; each god had his 'sympathetic' representative in the animal, the vegetable and the mineral kingdom which was

The theurgists' attempt to induce the temporary presence of a god in a human medium had a famous precedent at Delphi, where Apollo spoke through a priestess *Left* Apollo, on a bowl from Delphi, 5th century BC *Below right* Aegeus consults the priestess of Apollo: Attic vase of the 5th century BC

permanently *en rapport* with its divine cause. The symbols were hidden inside the statue, so that their identity was known only to the magician. The ceremony was completed by the recitation of certain secret 'life-giving names' which the gods had revealed to Julianus. If the consecration had been correctly performed, the statue would give omens to its worshippers by apparent movements or changes of expression, or would procure for them communications from the deity in sleep.

This practice, though foreign to classical Greek tradition, was by no means new. Its centre of diffusion appears to have been Egypt, where it was rooted in native religious ideas. The Hermetic dialogue *Asclepius* knows of it as an ancient Egyptian usage (see HERMETICA), and the magical papyri from Egypt offer recipes for the manufacture of such images. But from the 1st century AD onwards we begin to hear of the private fabrication and magical use of oracular statues outside Egypt. Its real vogue, however, came later with Iamblichus, who doubtless saw in it the most effective defence of the pagan cult of images against the sneers of Christian critics. From his teaching seems to derive the belief in consecrated statues as protective 'talismans' *(telesmata)* – enchanted images whose presence, concealed or visible, had power to avert natural disaster or military defeat. Such a 'talisman' was the statue of Achilles, dedicated in the Parthenon in 375 by the theurgist Nestorius, following instructions received in a dream, which is said to have saved Athens from an earthquake.

The Medium Possessed

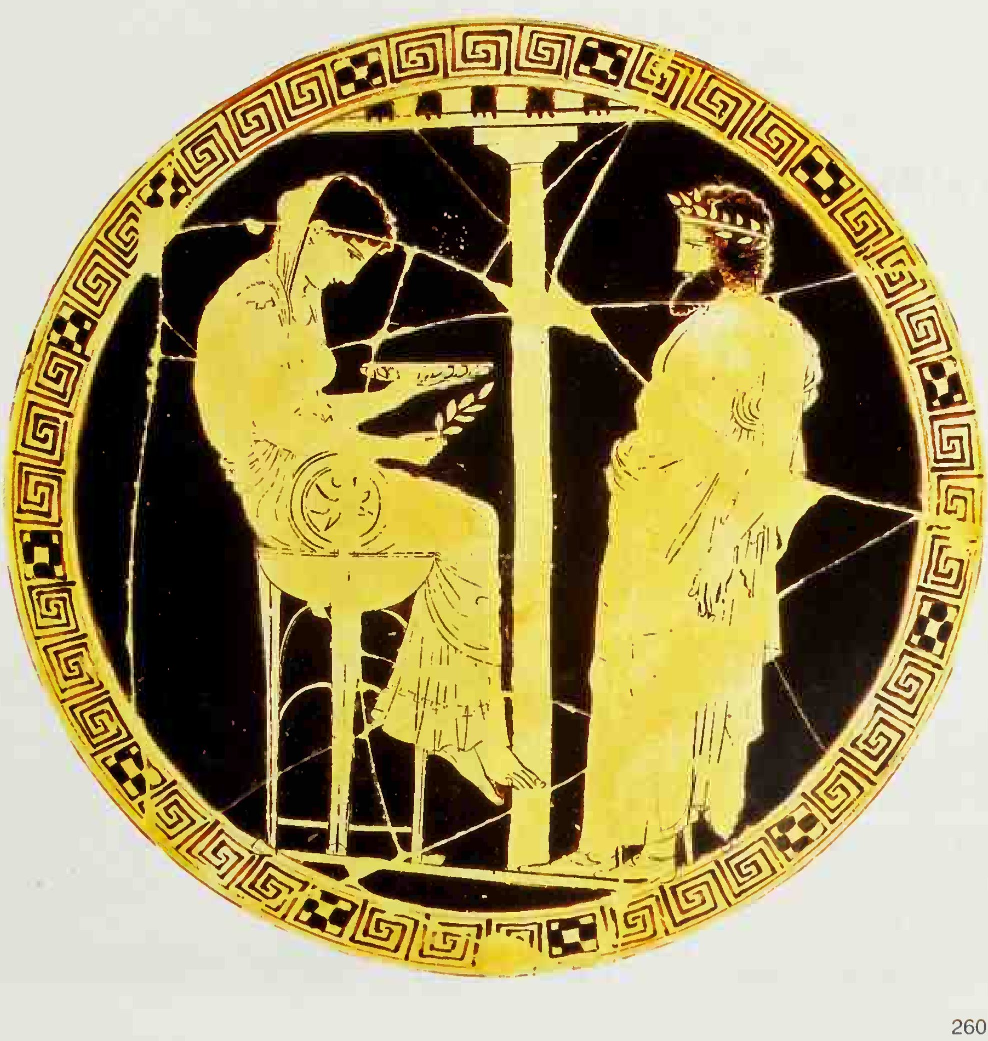
Of greater interest to the anthropologist and the psychical researcher, since it invites comparison with 'possession'-cults elsewhere and in particular with modern Spiritualism, is the other branch of theurgy, which sought to induce the temporary presence of a god not in a statue but in a living human organism. This too was in principle no novelty. At Delphi the oracular god Apollo had for many centuries spoken in the first person through the lips of an entranced priestess, and in the Roman Imperial Age similar methods were in use at several other public oracles (see ORACLES). But this was institutionalized mediumship, confined to certain holy places and certain officially authorized persons. What seems to have been new in theurgy was the systematic exploitation of mediumship at private seances which had no official standing and might apparently be held anywhere.

The best mediums, says Iamblichus, are 'young and rather simple persons'. Ritual means, such as the putting on of a special dress, were employed to throw them into a state of dissociation and to secure the presence of the particular god desired. A distinction is drawn between trance automatism, in which the medium's personality is completely in abeyance, and automatism without trance, which the medium can both induce and terminate at will. The symptoms of trance are said to vary widely with different communicating gods and on different occasions: there may be anaesthesia, including insensibility to fire; there may be bodily movement or complete immobility; there may be changes in the quality of the voice. The gods, we are told, come at first reluctantly, but more easily when they have formed a habit (that is, no doubt, when a secondary 'trance personality' has been built up). Most of these observations can be paralleled from the annals of modern Spiritualism (see MEDIUMS; SPIRITUALISM).

The possessing gods, like 'communicators' today, claimed to establish their authenticity by exhibiting supernormal powers. In true possession, we are assured, the possessing spirit will 'utter things outside the medium's knowledge and sometimes predict future events'. Some gods even venture an answer to such questions as, 'Will it be a boy or a girl?' This may be thought risky, but in the event of failure there were explanations available: 'bad conditions', or the disturbed state of the medium's mind, or the inopportune intervention of his normal self; or again the intrusion of a lying spirit who 'jumps in and usurps the place prepared for a higher being'. All these excuses recur in the literature of Spiritualism.

The gods also granted to the theurgists visible signs of their presence. Sometimes these were seen by all present, though on other occasions only the operating magician claimed to see them. Iamblichus alleges that there may be dilatation or levitation of the medium's person; that lights may be seen, sometimes by all present, at the moment when the medium is falling into or emerging from trance; and that the operator may see spirit forms entering the medium's body (this last he calls 'the most important sign'). To the psychical researcher this is a familiar-sounding list. The apparition of lights, which seems to have been the most frequent phenomenon (and one of the easiest to fake, as the Christian writer Hippolytus showed) is frequent also in the modern seance-room. Levitation and dilatation have been ascribed to modern mediums. And the 'spirit forms' – which may appear either as shapeless masses or in recognizable shapes – are suggestive of the so-called ectoplasm which modern observers claim to have seen emerge from, and return to, the bodies of certain mediums. Iamblichus also seems to refer to what spiritualists call 'apports' (materializations of objects); and from other sources we hear of 'autophonic' oracles, corresponding to the so-called 'direct voice' which dispenses with the use of the medium's vocal organs.

The similarities between ancient theurgy and modern Spiritualism appear too numerous to be dismissed as pure coincidence. And it is not altogether easy to account for them by literary tradition or any diffusionist theory. It is tempting to conclude that they have a common psychological basis in actual



Staatliche Museum, Berlin

experience. It should, however, be remembered that with all these similarities there is associated one fundamental contrast: what the Spiritualists ascribe to the activity of a discarnate human mind, the theurgists normally attribute to non-human spirits, 'gods' or 'daemons'. In this way they agree with the preponderant weight of ancient opinion. The possibility of communication with the dead was indeed seldom denied, save by Epicureans and sceptics, but religious feeling was strongly opposed to it. Under the Roman Empire necromancy was occasionally practised in secret, but it had no place in religious life and was subject to severe legal penalties. Nor is there any evidence that Graeco-Roman necromancers ever made use of mediums in their rites.

The pious theurgists, who did employ mediums, were not necromancers and had little interest in calling up the dead. They admitted, however, that cases of disputed identity – ghost or non-human spirit – might sometimes occur, since the lower orders of spirits were liable on occasion to simulate the higher. Thus for example Iamblichus was credited with having unmasked a self-styled Apollo, evoked by an Egyptian magician, who was in reality only the ghost of a gladiator.

But such cases were thought to be exceptional, as were also the occasional intrusions of the evil spirits known as 'anti-gods' (*antitheoi*): they happened, it was believed, chiefly where the operator was inexperienced or ritually impure. The motivation of the theurgist was religious. He was not interested in demonstrating survival, which he took for granted; his object was to achieve communion with the divine beings of a traditional faith and by their aid to transcend earthly experience and 'ascend to the intellectual fire'.

E.R.DODDS

FURTHER READING: Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (Cairo, Institut Francais, 1956); E. R. Dodds, 'Supernormal Phenomena in Classical Antiquity' *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research,* vol. 55 (1971).

THIRD EYE

THE THIRD EYE of esoteric speculation is the invisible eye of spiritual perception and second sight, said to be used by psychics and sensitives to see beyond the limited material realm and observe things hidden to ordinary sight. Closed in most people, it is supposed to be located around the middle of the forehead, just above the junction of the eyebrows. The third eye is believed to be either connected with the pineal gland or identical with it. Far in the distant past, the theory goes, human beings had a third eye on top of their heads which enabled them to see into spiritual realms, but it gradually atrophied and sank into the convolutions of the brain, and so human spiritual perception was dimmed.

The pineal, which takes its name from the fact that it is shaped like a pine cone, is a tiny gland the size of a pea, attached to the midbrain. It is in fact sensitive to light, which causes it to release the hormone melatonin into the bloodstream, and through its link with the pituitary it is connected with the early development of sexuality. The pineal is further back in the head than the brow, where the esoteric third eye is located, but occultists say that it moves forward on an invisible stalk to its position in the forehead.

Hindu tradition links the third eye with the *sahasrara* or crown chakra, the highest of the energy centres in the human body (see CHAKRAS), and identifies it as the doorway through which the human being can experience the spiritual cosmos. According to yoga practitioners, the third eye can be awakened through meditation and imagination, and in the West, too, the pineal has long been connected with the powers of imagination and the soul. In the 4th century BC the Greek anatomist Herophilus believed that the pineal gland regulates the flow of thought and René Descartes in the 17th century described it as 'the seat of imagination', which acts as the channel through which the soul or the mind influences the body.

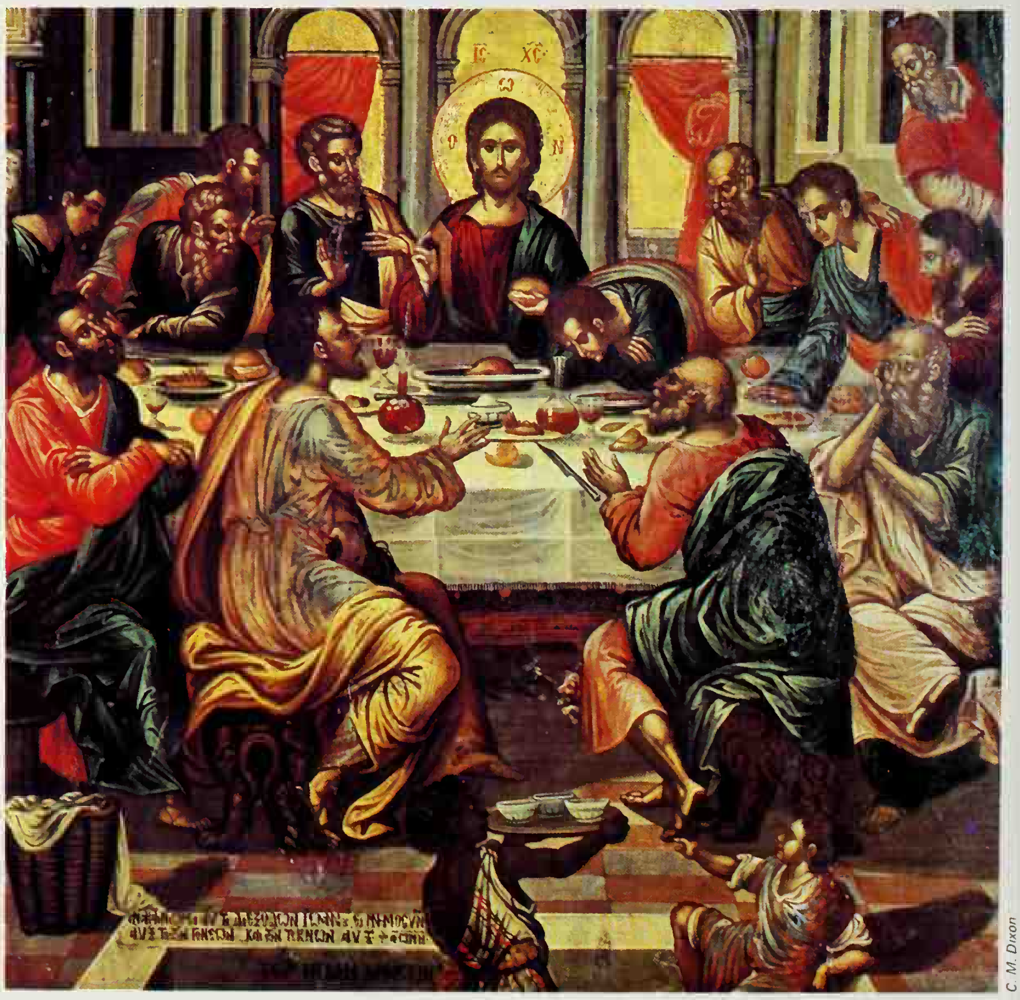
The Tarot card number 13 is Death, the skeleton, 13 sat down to the Last Supper, and 13 is the traditional number of a coven of witches: the number's uncanny and ominous associations reach back to pagan times

THIRTEEN

THAT THE NUMBER 13 is unlucky is one of the most common and persistent of superstitions and one of the few that is openly catered to. Hotel managements still frequently take care to have no 13th floor and some builders and local authorities do not number a house 13, because if they do it will be difficult to dispose of. Gustav Jahoda records in his book *The Psychology of Superstition* that in 1965, when the Queen paid a visit to West Germany, the number of the platform at Duisburg railway station from which her train was to leave was changed from 13 to 12A.

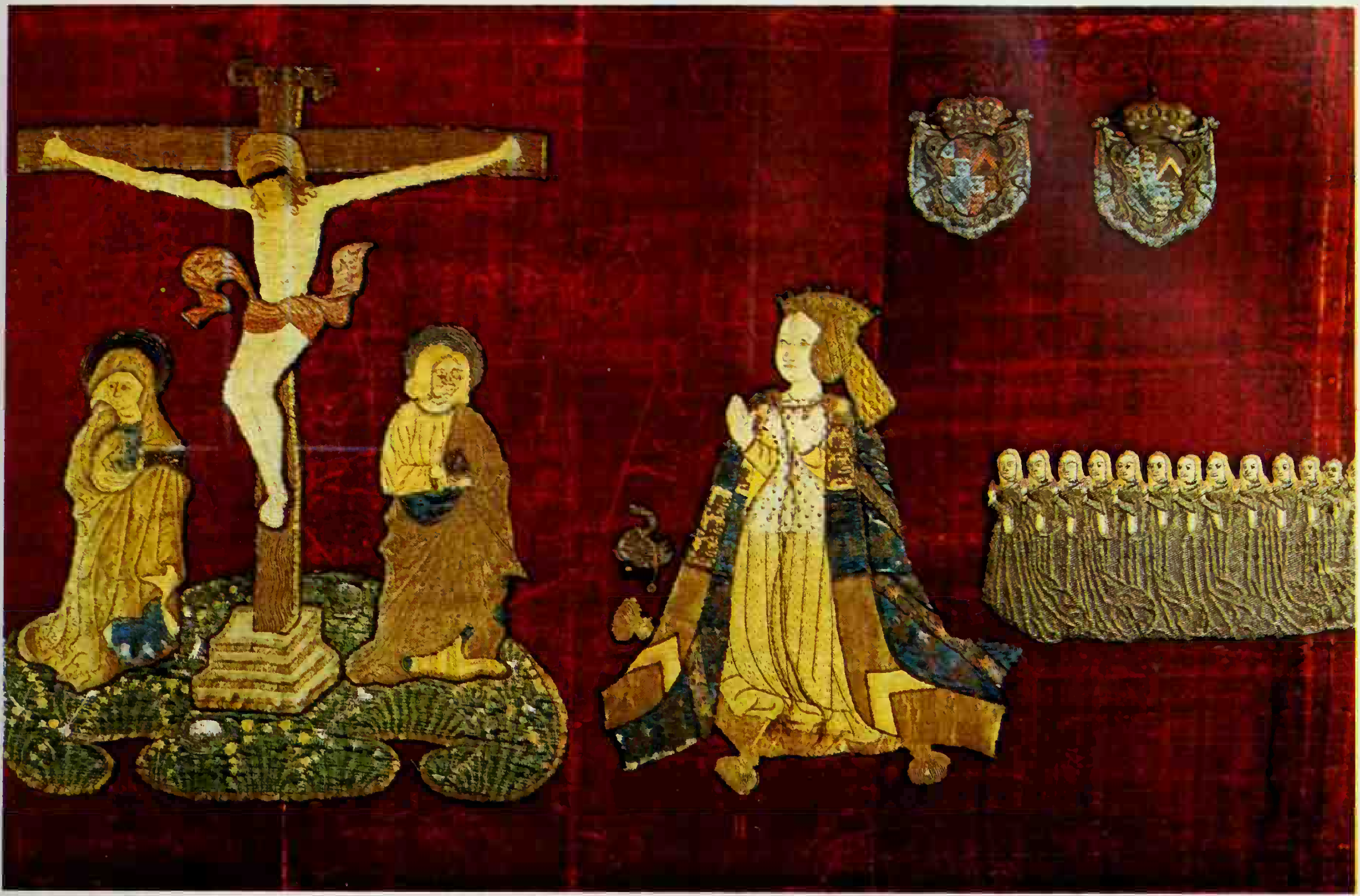
Thirteen to Dinner

A great many people dislike parties of 13 and it is thought to be extremely unlucky for this number of people to sit down to a table. One of them, sometimes said to be the first person to rise from the table, or some-



C. M. Dixon

***The Last Supper* by Damaskinos, a 16th-century Cretan ikon painter: the fact that 13 people attended the Last Supper, which was followed by betrayal and death, has added to the number's evil reputation. It is still thought very unlucky for 13 people to sit down to a table**



Victoria and Albert Museum

times the last, will die or suffer some damaging misfortune before a year is out. The belief was recorded, in Oxfordshire, that it was ominous for 13 people to be together in one room, especially for the one who was nearest the door and, in London, that if the number on a bus ticket added to 13 it brought bad luck.

The 13th day of the month is widely regarded as a most unpropitious day for beginning any new undertaking (although there seems to be nothing unfortunate about being born on it) and even people who think of themselves as entirely unsuperstitious have been known to show slight symptoms of unease when the 13th falls on a Friday, which is an unlucky day in its own right (see DAYS).

The reasons for this uneasiness about 13 are obscure. Though it has probably been strengthened by the fact that 13 sat down to the Last Supper – the first person to rise from the table being Judas, who went out to betray Christ – the uneasiness is older than Christianity, for even the Romans associated 13 with death and misfortune. The root reason may be that 13 is one more than 12, which is a number of completeness – the whole year consisting of 12 months, the whole day of twice 12 hours – and so it has the connotation of dangerously exceeding proper limits, of going beyond a natural cycle or starting on a new and uncertain course.

In early Christian numerology 13 was sometimes categorized as the number of sin because it goes beyond the 12 apostles, though it could equally be a holy and admirable number which adds faith in the Trinity to the Ten Commandments. In the European magical tradition 13 is the number of necromancy, of bringing the dead back to temporary life, which again implies transgressing natural and proper limits.

Lady Westmorland and her 13 children pray to Christ, in a 16th-century altar frontal: 13 is widely regarded as an unlucky number, possibly because it is one more than 12, a number of completeness, and so has the connotation of dangerously exceeding proper limits or starting on a new and uncertain course

Submitting to the Magician's Will

One of the Graeco-Egyptian magical texts of the early centuries AD provides a method of animating a corpse which can then be forced to obsess a woman until she submits to the magician. It involves making a doll to represent the woman, piercing it with 13 needles and putting it on the grave of someone who died young or by violence, and then conjuring the corpse by incantation to rise up and stalk the streets to the woman's house, there to prey on her mind until she does the magician's will.

The Tarot trump – un-numbered in the traditional packs, but the only number missing is 13 – is Death, a skeleton who is mowing a field of human heads with a scythe, while hands and feet grow in their place, a symbol of death and new life.

The fact that 13 is the traditional number of a coven of witches, with the 13th being the Devil or the local leader, may also have contributed to the number's evil reputation. Margaret Murray, in *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* and *The God of the Witches*, maintained that witches were in fact organized in groups of 13, each with a leader and 12 followers. Modern witches generally regard 13 as the proper number for a coven, though many real covens are smaller. The famous witch Isabel Gowdie (see GOWDIE) said that there were 13 in each coven, and in 1673 a woman named Anne Armstrong, of Morpeth in Northumberland, said that every 'covey' of witches had 13 members and 'every covey of 13 had a Devil, who danced first with those boasting the most evil'. But in general the evidence for real covens of 13 is slight and unconvincing.

It has been suggested that a 'baker's dozen' of 13 really means 'the Devil's dozen' and is derived from 'Boucca's dozen', Boucca being an old name for a god or spirit, surviving in the buccas of Cornish lore (see CORNWALL). Margaret Murray, who, to the mingled scorn and amusement of more orthodox historians, connected the founding of the Order of the Garter by King Edward III with the 'old religion' of witchcraft, noted that there were 26 knights, equivalent to two covens, and that Edward's mantle as head of the order was decorated with 168 garters which, adding the one he wore on his own leg, makes 169, or 13 times 13, equalling 13 covens. However, it seems more likely that the number 13 here was drawn directly from the model of Christ and the 12 apostles.

A bluff, straightforward fellow who preferred strong-arm tactics to diplomacy, the red-bearded god of thunder, whose hammer laid low trolls and giants, was a god after the Viking's heart

THOR

THE GOD OF THUNDER among the Germanic peoples, Donar, developed in the Scandinavian North into a vigorous, dynamic figure of mighty strength, with a red beard, a voracious appetite, and a great axe-hammer to protect gods and men from the evil forces of chaos and destruction. Thor remained a dominant influence until the end of the heathen period, and in the 10th century his silver hammer symbol was worn in opposition to the Christian cross, while his famous fishing exploit, when he hauled up the World Serpent from the sea, was carved on crosses and memorial stones in Scandinavia and the British Isles and celebrated in a number of Icelandic poems.

Thor was a suitable god for a farming community, for he was closely linked with the earth. As the 11th-century chronicler Adam of Bremen observed, he ruled not only thunder and lightning but winds and showers, fair weather and crops – while his wife Sif, famous for her bright hair, might be a variant of the ancient fertility goddess, typifying the golden corn.

Thus it is not surprising that Norwegians leaving for Iceland used sometimes to take with them earth from under the family shrine to the god, and also the two main pillars supporting the building, the 'high-seat pillars', which sometimes had Thor's image carved on them. These could be thrown overboard as the ship drew near Iceland, so that Thor himself might lead his worshippers to the place where he desired them to dwell. The ancient Germanic thunder god was associated with oak forests (see GERMANIC MYTHOLOGY), and in Iceland, where forests were unknown, the wooden pillars sacred to the god served as an echo of the earlier tradition.

His worshippers turned to Thor for blessing on hearth and home, and protection from wind and storms, as also from evil spirits haunting the waste places and bringing misfortune to the community. He presided also over law, an important part of Icelandic life. The Althing, the main Law Assembly held yearly at Thingvellir, opened on Thursday, Thor's day. When men made contracts with one another they swore oaths on Thor's ring, a heavy arm-ring of gold or silver which was said to lie on his altar. The hammer of Thor was raised over the newborn infant received into the community, and was laid in the lap of the bride and carved on memorial stones to the dead.

Thor could help travellers, since he controlled the winds and the sea. The red beard of the god may be associated with the stormy sky, while his terrible blazing eyes and great voice remind us that he controlled the lightning and thunder.

In the myths Thor is an active figure, frequently said to be off fighting trolls, and continually engaged in struggle and adventure. He does not ride on horseback like Odin, but is said to walk to the assembly of the gods, wading through rivers. In his passage across the sky, however, he is said to travel in a wagon drawn by goats, and the noise of its rattling wheels is heard as thunder in the world of men. When he hurled his hammer at giants, rocks split and boulders were shattered (see HAMMER). The hammer symbol long lived on in folklore, and was a protective amulet not only against lightning and fire, but against theft and flood and all kinds of calamities, while the sign of the hammer made with the hand, like that of the cross, conveyed a blessing and gave protection.

Sometimes in the myths Thor hurled glowing fragments of red-hot metal at his enemies, but his favourite technique was to smash their skulls with his hammer, as in his duel with the giant Hrungnir. Thor flung his hammer, and the giant, who was armed with a stone shield, threw a whetstone at Thor. Hammer and whetstone met in mid air; the hammer went on to shatter Hrungnir's head, but one piece of the stone lodged in Thor's forehead. A possible explanation of this myth might be sought in Lapp custom: the image of the thunder god of the Lapps had an iron nail in the head on which fire could be kindled with flint, in a ritual which re-enacted the lightning.

In accounts of Thor's temples in Norway, there are descriptions of large figures of the god seated in a chair or, in one case, in his wagon, with goats of bronze which could be pulled along by a cord. A number of runic stones in Norway and Sweden have invocations to Thor to hallow the memorial, and his protection evidently extended to the dead as well as the living.

Hero of Myth

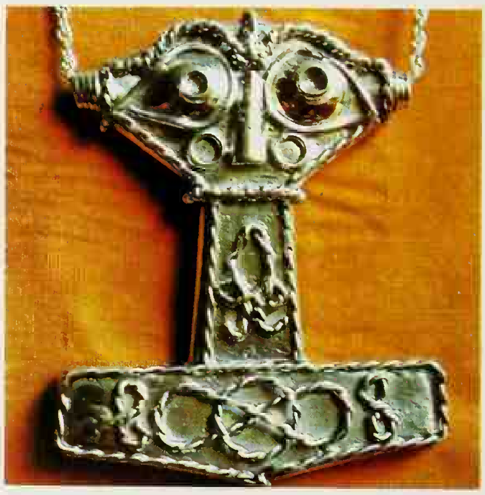
Thor plays a large part in the myths, and from these much of our knowledge of his powers and importance is drawn. Sometimes he appears as a figure of comedy, the bluff, simple fellow who trusts in his strong arm and has no time for the tortuous wiles of Loki and Odin. But the humorous tales do not indicate hostility towards the god, but rather testify to the affection felt for him by his worshippers. One of the most famous myths was that of his struggle with the World Serpent, of which several accounts survive. He went out in the boat of the sea giant Hymir, who did not recognize his divine passenger, and he had with him the head of Hymir's largest ox. The giant was alarmed by the speed with which the boat moved when Thor took the oars, and utterly terrified when the ox-head was thrown out as bait for the serpent which encircles the world, and the monster was hooked on Thor's line. As the struggle continued Thor took on his divine strength, pushing his feet through the boat and bracing himself against the sea bottom. The serpent's terrible head appeared and the two stared fiercely into each other's eyes; then according to one version Hymir cut the line, and the serpent fell back into the depths, there to await the world's end. Thor in wrath knocked the giant into the sea and waded back to shore.

The struggle between the sky god and a monster of the deep is a pattern familiar in many mythologies. Originally Thor may have slain the serpent, although at the end of the pagan period the episode was set in the account of Ragnarok, the last battle between gods and monsters, and Thor, after slaying the serpent, himself perished from its poisonous breath (see SCANDINAVIA).

The fishing story is linked with a visit to Hymir's hall and a battle with the giants. Hymir's wife assisted Thor, who had been challenged to break the giant's precious cup, by prompting him to hurl it at Hymir's head, against which it was shattered. Thor then marched away with the giant's cauldron, which was to be used to brew ale for a banquet of the gods. This is one of a series of tales in which Thor enters the realm of the giants and finally overcomes them, although the odds at first are against him.

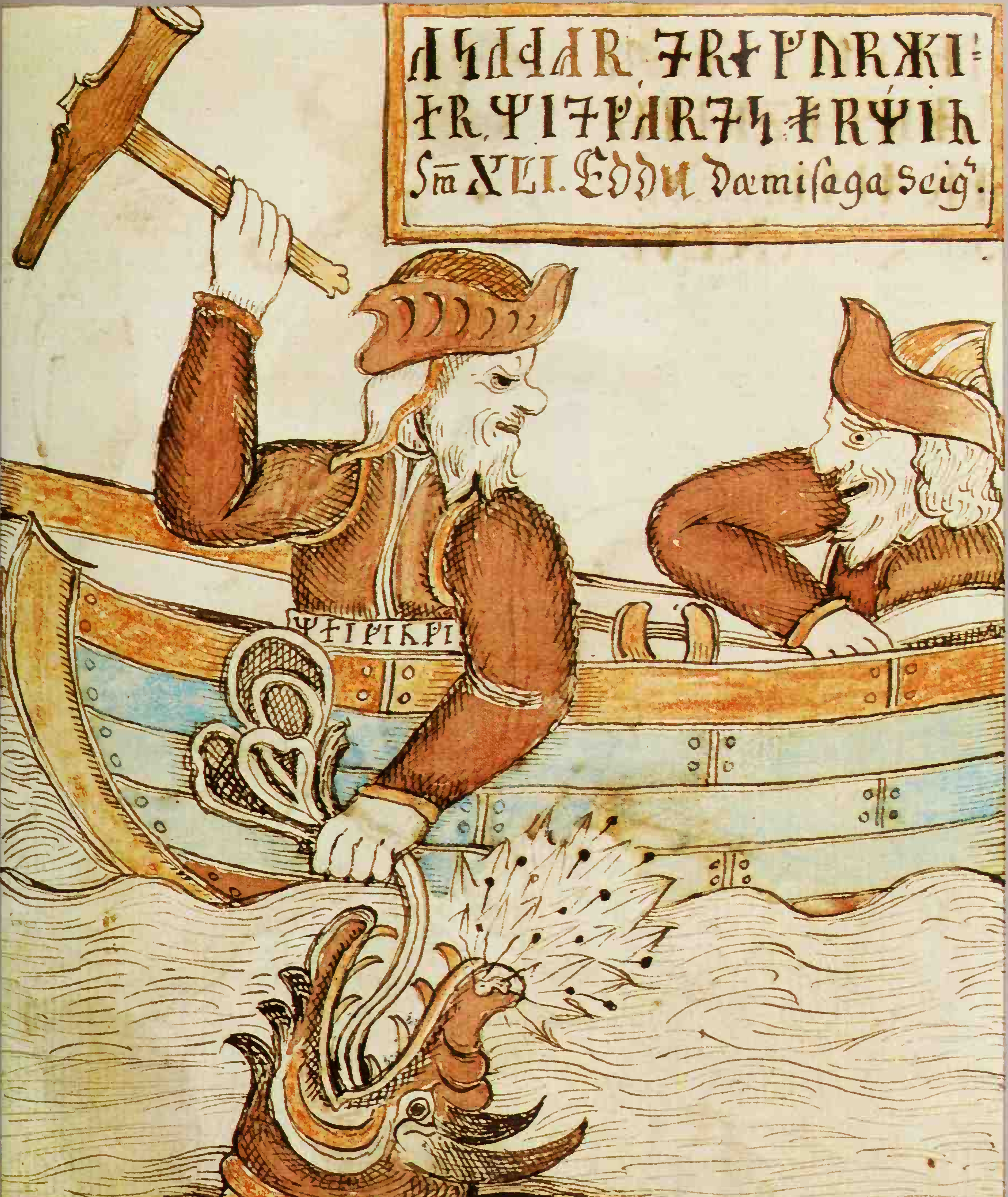
Once he visited the kingdom of Geirrod, who had forced the god Loki to bring Thor out without his hammer or his belt of might. Thor was again helped by a giantess, who lent him another belt, gloves of iron and her magic staff, so that he was able to survive the ordeals prepared for him. First he was beset by the swelling waters of the River Vimur, because one of Geirrod's daughters stood astride the river and was adding to the waters by her own efforts. He struck her with a well-directed rock and reached the shore with the help of a rowan tree. Next he sat down in the goatshed, and found his seat being forced up to the roof by two other daughters of the giant, but he pushed it down with his magic staff and broke their backs. Finally Geirrod himself flung a ball of hot iron at him, but Thor caught it in the gloves and sent it back to lay Geirrod low.

Another famous story reads like a satiric version of the myths, and is told with much wit by the antiquarian writer of the 12th century, the Icelander Snorri Sturluson. Thor set out with Loki and two servants to visit the realm of Utgard-Loki, a giant



John Moss

Left **The hammer of Thor, the Scandinavian thunder god, as a talisman: in the North the sign of the hammer rivalled the cross as a sacred symbol and was a protective amulet against lightning, fire and calamities of all kinds *Right* The struggle between a sky god and a monster of the deep occurs in many mythologies: Thor in the giant Hymir's boat, catching the World Serpent, an illustration from an *Edda* MS**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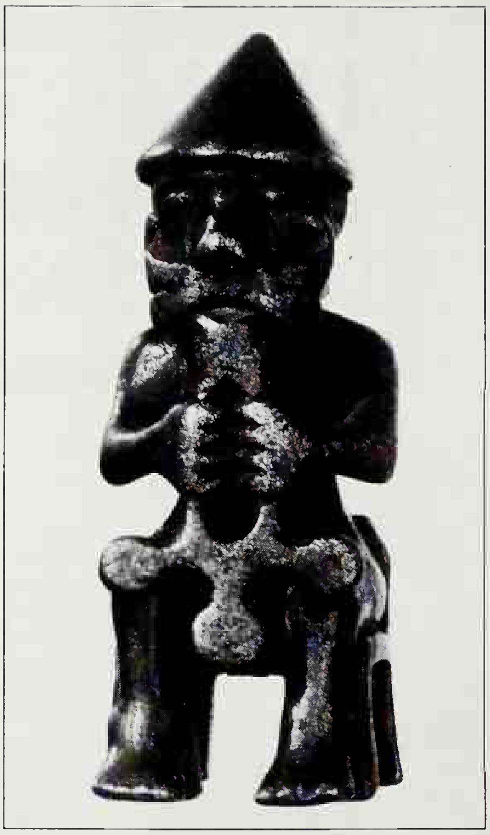
expert in magic. On the way, they encountered an enormous giant, who gave his name as Skrymir and offered to accompany them. Thor was continually frustrated, since he was unable to unfasten the giant's bag of provisions, and when he finally lost patience and struck Skrymir on the head, the giant only asked if a leaf had fallen, or a bird dropped something from the tree above. Finally he left them and they went on to Utgard, a stronghold of such size that they were able to creep through the bars of the gate. The king was rather contemptuous of such puny figures, but asked if they had any special skills.

Joke at Thor's Expense

In the trials of strength that followed Thor and his companions suffered further humiliation. Loki had an eating contest with a man called Logi, but although he devoured all the meat he was given his opponent ate the bones and the trough as well. Thialfi ran a race with a lad called Hugi, and was utterly outstripped. Thor himself undertook a drinking contest, but to his shame was unable to empty the horn offered him in three draughts: the liquid only fell a little below the rim. Next he tried to raise the king's grey cat from the floor, but could only get one paw off the ground. Finally he was asked to wrestle with the king's old foster-mother, but found himself unable to throw her. The king feasted them well after their defeat, and next morning they took their leave. Once outside the gates, the truth was revealed to them. The blows aimed at Skrymir, really Utgard-Loki in disguise, had been diverted by magic and had fallen on three mountains, leaving deep pits where the hammer had struck. The bag which Thor could not undo was fastened by iron bands; Loki's opponent in the contest was Fire, which can consume more than any god or man, while Thialfi had raced against Thought, swifter than any in its flight. The horn offered to Thor had its tip in the ocean, and his great gulps had lowered the sea, as if the tide had ebbed; while the cat was in reality the World Serpent, and all had trembled when Thor raised it so far by his strength, lest the universe should perish; his last opponent was Old Age, able to overcome the mightiest.


Hamlyn Group

Small bronze statuette of Thor, of *c* 1000 AD, seated in a chair and holding the hammer; it was found in Iceland where Thor, who controlled rain and storms, was highly regarded by farmers and seafarers

Thus the witty tale, by a clever series of reversals, reveals the mighty powers of the great sky god even as it makes merry at his expense. The indomitable Thor, trusting in his own strength and rejoicing in a good fight against heavy odds, is a fitting deity for the Viking Age; while in the conception of the mighty god of the sky, who supports justice among men and fights unceasingly against the forces of chaos, there is a deeper truth than at first might be apparent in the light-hearted myths of his exploits against the giants.

H. R. ELLIS DAVIDSON

FURTHER READING: H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Penguin, 1964); E. O. G. Turville Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (Weidenfeld, 1964).

The identity of the Thracian Rider, and what he meant to those who carved his figure, remains uncertain but clues to his character may be deduced from the way he is depicted on the numerous stone stelae on which he appears

THRACIAN RIDER GOD

OVER A WIDE AREA of the Balkans, especially in the territory known as Thrace in ancient times (now Bulgaria), great numbers of monuments have been found of what is called the 'Thracian Rider'. These monuments generally take the form of stone stelae, upon which the figure of a horseman is carved, together with other attendant figures or symbols. They date from the Roman Imperial period, mostly from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Some specimens have been found further afield, in Anatolia and Western Europe. The identity of the 'Rider', and what he meant to those who carved his figure on these stones, remain uncertain, despite the research of many scholars. That he commanded the allegiance of many peoples is evident from the multitude of the monuments bearing his effigy, and the wide area of their diffusion.

There are a few deductions which can be made about the significance of this mysterious figure. First, it must be noted that the figures of a horse and rider frequently occur on classical Greek and Etruscan funerary monuments. Such representations had a mortuary significance – the deceased was departing from this world to the next. But the Thracian Rider does not appear on tombstones, and so cannot be reckoned as having a sepulchral character. Instead, his monuments were located in sanctuaries, indicating that he was a divinity of some kind.

Unknown Hero

Here the mystery of his identity becomes very puzzling. Although the monuments often bear inscriptions in Greek and Latin, and name the divine Rider to whom they are dedicated, the mystery is only deepened by what they record. The name most frequently given is 'Heros' or 'Heron'. This could be the designation of a dead man, for the dead were sometimes 'heroized' in Greek funerary inscriptions. But this is unlikely to have been the case here, since the monuments were not tombstones; some inscriptions, moreover, read *theo Heroti*, 'to the god Hero'.

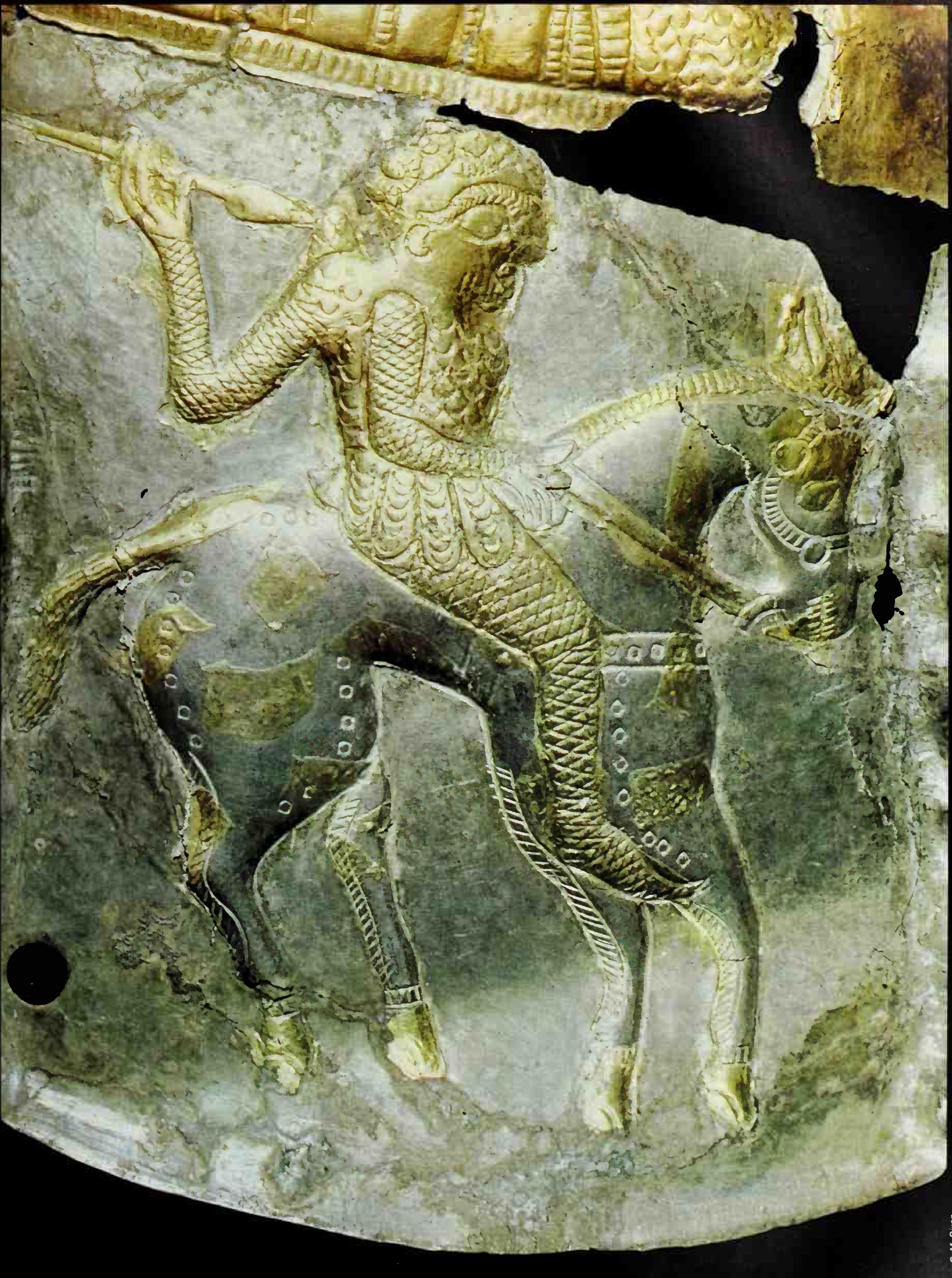
In other inscriptions, the Rider is named Phoebus, that is, Apollo, or Asclepios, the Greek god of healing. Such names suggest that the mysterious Rider was being equated with well-known Greek gods, though himself remaining unnamed.

Clues to what the divine Rider meant to his devotees seem to be provided by various iconographic features of the monuments. The Rider was generally depicted with his cloak streaming out behind him, suggesting vigour and speed of movement. He frequently flourishes a club or double-axe, the latter being a symbol of many Near Eastern weather or sky gods. But more significant is the fact that a number of monuments show the deity with three heads. Such multiplication of physical features is usually a primitive way of suggesting superhuman ability. Three heads, so arranged that one looks forward, one backwards, and one full-face, would seem to indicate a deity who was all-seeing and all-knowing. Since these powers were usually attributes of a sun god, the Thracian Rider probably had solar associations, even if he was not actually a sun god. Then the fact that he is sometimes shown as hunting a great wild boar, often a symbol of evil, may mean that the deity was regarded as a divine saviour, who hunted and subdued the forces of evil and disorder.

These deductions are reasonable, but they cannot be proved. However, we may certainly conclude that, whatever his significance, the mysterious Rider god answered some deep need or aspiration felt by the various peoples inhabiting these rather savage regions in ancient times.

FURTHER READING: R. Pettazoni, *The All-Knowing God* (Arno Press, 1978).

Horse and rider, worked in silver on a helmet of the 4th century BC, found in the tomb of a Thracian chief and now in the Bucharest National Museum of Antiquities: the horseman motif appears in classical times over a wide area of the Balkans but its significance is still not fully understood



C. M. Dixon

THREE

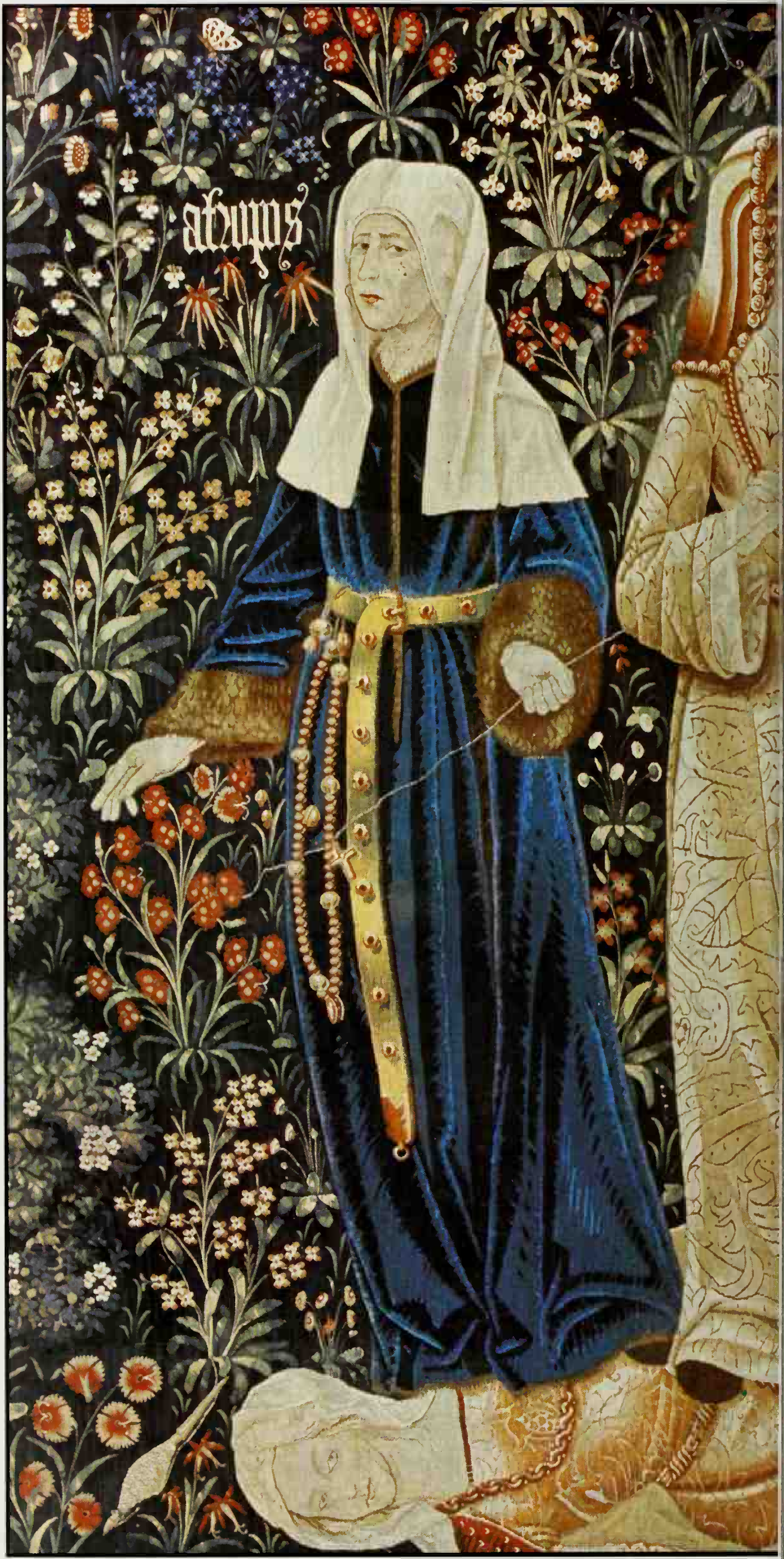
THIS IS GENERALLY considered the luckiest of numbers and if your name adds to 3 (see ALPHABET), you will be described by numerologists as a fortunate being indeed. Creative, clever, charming, lively and entertaining, extremely successful, a 3 has a natural attraction for both money and the opposite sex. He is one of those people to whom everything seems to come easily, who succeeds without really trying. Rarely worried or depressed, he takes life as it comes and may have difficulty in taking anything seriously, though he will have a strong underlying sense of his own value and importance. One of the key ideas attached to 3 in numerology is 'expression', and those whose number it is express themselves wittily, effectively and with frequency. Imaginative and optimistic, cheerful, generous and agreeable, they get on well with everyone, but perhaps more because they are anxious to be liked than because of any deep concern for others.

A 3 enjoys the limelight and detests obscurity. Active, energetic and proud, he may have a commanding air about him and he will make a bad subordinate. He likes to show off and to be admired, but is probably more nervous and sensitive than his assured and brilliant exterior suggests. He has a tendency to expend his energies wastefully in too many directions and, since he loves pleasure and luxury, to scatter his money about. Though always the life and soul of the party, he can sometimes be exasperatingly vain, gossipy and superficial.

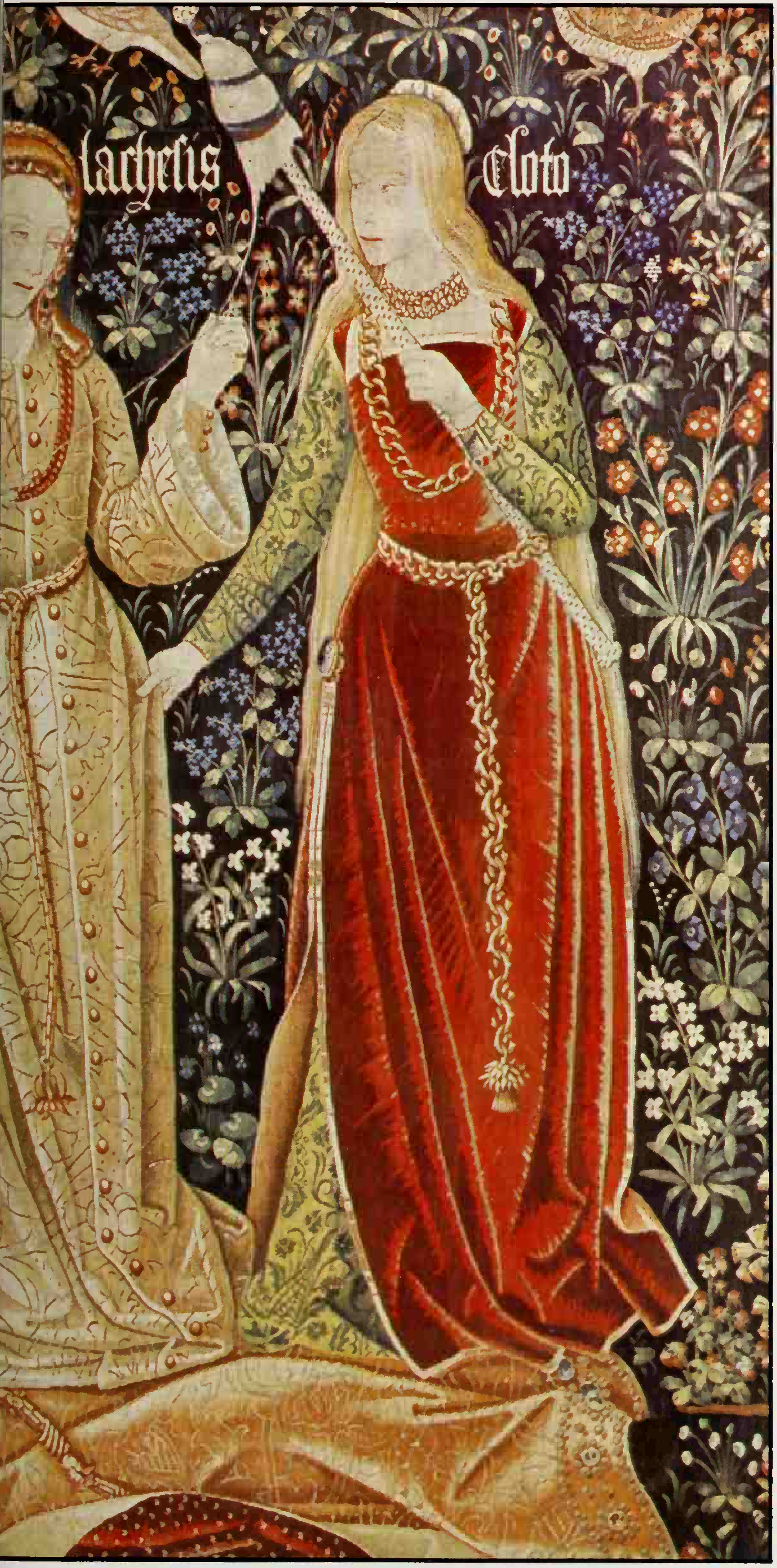
The Manifest Creator

Behind this picture of the creativity and self-expression of 3 are a number of converging numerological theories. To begin with, the number 1, though potentially all-creative, is regarded as barren by itself, for however many times it is multiplied (fertilized) by itself, it remains 1. The number 2 introduces a pair of opposites, but 2 multiplied by 1 remains 2. It is 3 which fruitfully reconciles these opposites and creates more numbers (3 + 2 = 6). As the French magician Eliphas Levi put it: 'Were God only one He would never be creator or father. Were He two there would be antagonism or division in the infinite, which would mean the division also or death of all possible things. He is therefore three for the creation by Himself and in His image of the infinite multitude of beings and numbers.'

Again, 1 is assigned to the point and 2 to the line, both of which are theoretical constructs. When 3 points are connected, in the triangle, the first plane figure is constructed, the first which has surface and is therefore observable. So 1 is regarded as the number of God as alone and complete in himself but hidden and unmanifested. In 2 something emanates from within God's wholeness to create the great opposite forces which run all through the universe. In 3



The Three Fates, in a 15th century tapestry; the number 3 occurs frequently in Greek mythology, as a mark of completeness



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the opposites are reconciled and God is for the first time manifest, for the first time comprehensible to human experience in having, as it were, a surface. This is followed by the creation of solidity in 4, when a fourth point is added above the triangle and a pyramid constructed (see FOUR). Then the 3 of spirit and the 4 of matter, added or multiplied, produce 7 and 12, the numbers which govern the rhythms and cycles of life in the universe – the 7 planets and days of the week, the 12 zodiac signs, months and hours of the day (see SEVEN; TWELVE).

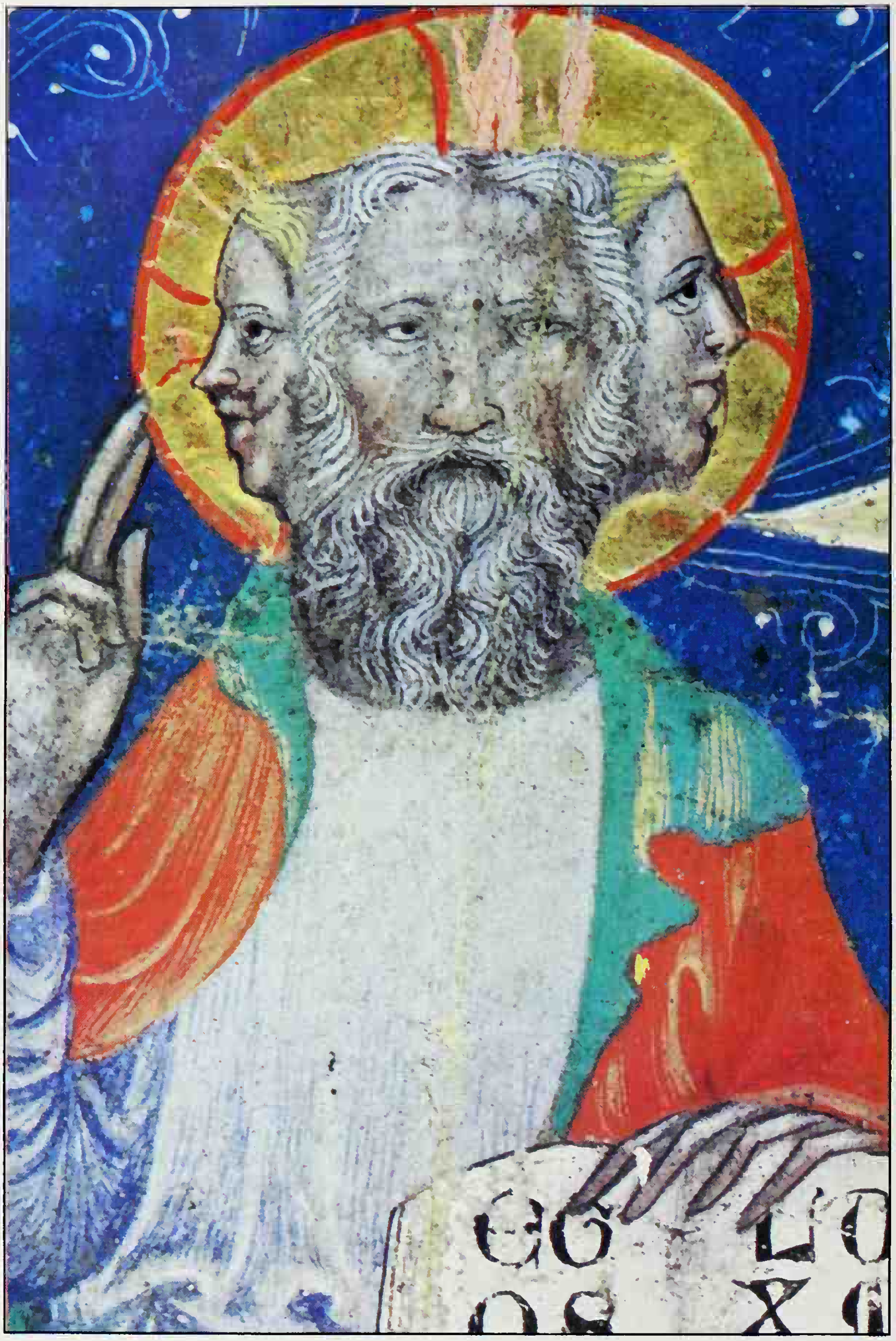
Added to all this is the sexual symbolism of 3. It is the first of the masculine numbers (see NUMEROLOGY) and the number of the male genitals, which are threefold. The triangle is a natural symbol for the male genitals (though it can also be a symbol for the female). Where God as 1 is the hidden and unknowable Absolute, God as 3 is the manifest creator of 'the infinite multitude of beings and numbers', and this is the basic numerological interpretation of the Trinity, the three-fold godhead.

It follows that 3 is the number of creativity and self-expression on the human plane, as it is the number of God making himself known on the divine plane. The connection with 'surface' accounts for some of the other characteristics of 3 – sparkle and glitter, showing off, a tendency to superficiality. The triangle, facing 3 ways, accounts for the tendency to expend effort in many directions, but this and other traits allotted to 3 also have a genital reference – attractiveness, need for approval, pride, energy, love of pleasure. The idea of 3 reconciling the opposites in a third term which harmonizes and transcends them accounts for the harmonious progress through life attributed to 3, easy money and success, getting on well with everyone.

Three Blind Mice

As the number of the Trinity, in Christian numerology 3 is naturally linked with the most holy, the most perfect, the best. But the number's connection with the superlative is older, and is expressed in the Greek word *trismegistos* ('thrice-greatest', superlatively great) and the Latin *ter felix* ('thrice-happy', happiest). The notion of the superlative itself involves the third term in a series of 3 – good, better, best. And 3 is not only connected with 'best' but also with 'all', and is the most important of the numbers of completeness. Time is made of 3 ingredients (past, present and future) and so is space (length, breadth and thickness). All created things have a beginning, a middle and an end. The feeling that 3 is the basis of everything we experience may account for the belief that runs of luck, good or bad, tend to happen in threes. 'Third time lucky' is a common phrase and, on the other hand, if two unlucky things happen one after the other, some people will deliberately break a dish or do some other minor piece of damage in the hope of ending the run of ill luck.

Three of anything is somehow 'all' of it and 'enough' of it. 'I'll give you 3 guesses,' we say, with the feeling that 3 are enough. The hero of a folktale frequently has 3 wishes or 3 tries at a task, the heroine has



British Museum

Left **The godhead as both One and Three, from a 14th century manuscript**
Right **The 3 magi and their 3 gifts were regarded as foreshadowing the Christian Trinity: 6th century mosaic from the church of San Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna**

3 suitors, and 3 frequently bobs up as a number of completeness in nursery rhymes. Goldilocks met 3 bears, there were 3 blind mice, 3 little kittens who lost their mittens.

In the distant past behind all this there may lie very early methods of counting which used special words for 1 and 2, but for 3 or more simply said 'many'. The Babylonian term for a constellation, for instance, regardless of how many stars it might contain, was 'three stars', meaning 'many stars'. In this way the connotations of 3 may have come to include 'many', 'all', 'abundance', 'best', and so 'lucky'.

Numbers of completeness are always important in magic, because they prescribe how many times an action must be repeated to be effective. To chant an incantation 3 times, for example, is magically to chant it 'enough' times or 'all possible' times. In European magic 3 is even more important than 7 or 9, and the instruction to repeat a process 3 times over occurs constantly.

The Threefold God

Medieval Christian numerologists remarked on various uses of 3 as a number of completeness in the New Testament, including the 3 gifts of the magi to the infant Jesus, the 3 temptations in the wilderness, the 3 denials of Christ by Peter, the 3 falls on the road to Golgotha, the 3 days between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the 3 appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples. These could all be taken as foreshadowings or reflections of the Trinity.

The period of 33 years is also regarded as significant by some modern occultists. A. E. Abbott observes in his *Encyclopaedia of Numbers* that 'important phenomena of history receive their special imprint through the fact that they unfold in a cycle of 33 years from their origin to maturity and fulfilment or to rebirth . . . The life of Christ, occupying 33 years on earth, has impressed its forces and rhythms into the earth-organism and into time, thus giving form to world history.'

The doctrine of the Trinity was officially recognized by the Council of Constantinople in 381. The earliest Christians were Jews who had been brought up to believe that God is One and to think of him as the heavenly Father. But in recognizing Christ as divine they introduced a second person into the godhead, the Son. And in their confidence that the spirit of God, which had descended on the apostles after Christ's death (Acts, chapter 2), was with them and working in them, they added a third divine personage, the Holy Spirit. The nature of God as Three-in-One, and of the relationship between the persons of the Trinity, caused an immense amount of philosophical speculation (see HERESY).

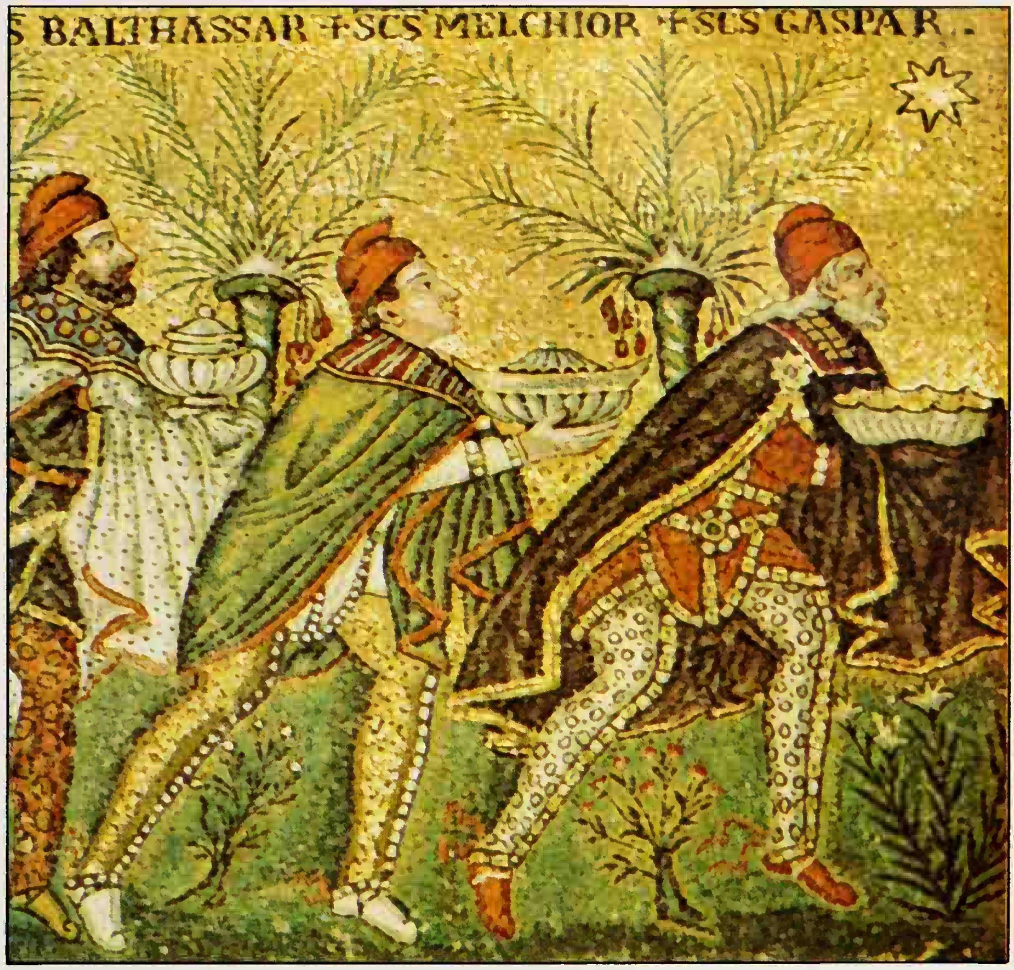
Occasional groupings of deities in threes can be observed in pagan pre-Christian religions: Osiris, Isis and Horus as father, mother and child in Egypt, or the triad of Serapis, Isis and Harpocrates (Horus) at Alexandria, or the three universal gods at the head of the pantheon in Mesopotamia (see MESOPOTAMIA). Numerous other examples come from the Celts, to whom 3 was a sacred number. They sometimes portrayed their deities in groups of 3, or with 3 heads or 3 faces (see BRIGIT; CELTS), apparently as a way of emphasizing their power and perhaps with the same basic idea of a single god making himself known in terms of 3 which underlies the numerological approach considered earlier.

Groups of 3 can also be found in Greek mythology, including the 3 Graces, the 3 Fates and the 3 Furies. Early in this century a German scholar counted more than 120 triads in Greek myth and ritual, but his conclusion was not that 3 was sacred to the Greeks but that it merely meant 'all' or 'many'. Greek triads attracted the interest of Renaissance humanists, who connected them with the Christian Trinity (even the 3 heads of Cerberus, the dog of the underworld, becoming an emblem of the Christian doctrine) and who saw them, again, in terms of a unity manifesting itself by displaying its 3 component parts, the opposites and the factor which reconciles them (see RENAISSANCE).

In Hinduism the concept of God as both 1 and 3 appears in Brahman, which in itself is One but which as it presents itself to the world is Three – Being, Consciousness and Joy, or the godhead which originates, sustains and destroys the universe, personified as the triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva (see BRAHMAN). In his book *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* R. C. Zaehner comments on the remarkable closeness of the concept of the threefold Brahman as *Sat* (Being), *Cit* (Logos or Reason) and *Ananda* (Joy or Love) to that of the Christian Trinity of the Father (Being), the Son (Logos) and the Holy Spirit (Love).

That God must be both 1 and 3, One as he essentially is, Three as he is manifested and known, has been observed by mystics of Christian and other traditions on the analogy, to put it over-simply, that a complete sentence must have a subject, a verb and an object. If there is divine love, there must also be a lover and a beloved, if there is divine knowledge there must also be a knower and what is known. Professor Zaehner quotes the 13th century Jewish mystic Abraham Abulafia, who said that the Master 'is called . . . the knowledge, the knower and the known, all at the same time, since all three are one in Him'; and a Sufi mystic, who was asked about the divine Union, and replied, 'Union, He Who unites, and He Who is united – and that is three.'

FURTHER READING: A. E. Abbott, *Encyclopaedia of Numbers* (Emerson Press); E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Penguin, 1967 reprint); R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1967 reprint).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C. M. Dixon

THRESHOLD

TO THIS DAY, a bridegroom will carry his bride across the threshold of their new home, even when the 'new home' is merely a hotel room in which they will spend their honeymoon. It is one of the pleasant minor customs attached to weddings but it has links with special ceremonies involving doorways and thresholds all over the world.

In Rome the god Janus (see JANUS) was present at the main doorway of every house and the threshold itself, a block of stone big enough to keep water and mud from spilling into the house from outside, was presided over by its own god and goddess, Limentius and Lima. When a bride came to her new home, she was lifted over the threshold by her husband. This was partly to prevent her from stumbling over it, which would have been a bad omen for the marriage, but there was evidently more to it than that, for she anointed the doorposts, preferably with wolf's fat, and fastened wool onto them before being carried in.

Similarly, the Chinese make sure that the bride's foot does not touch the threshold when she first goes into her husband's house, and in many other parts of the world the bride is either carried across the threshold or takes care to step over it without treading on it. Other rituals involving doorways include sprinkling blood or water or perfume on the threshold and doorposts to purify them, and hanging charms or sacred objects from the lintel or on the doorposts.

In his book *Folklore in the Old Testament* Sir James Frazer compared a number of threshold customs and beliefs, taking as his starting point the officials of the Temple in Jerusalem who were called 'keepers of the threshold'. They are mentioned several times in the Old Testament (2 Kings 25.18, for example). There is also the passage in 1 Samuel (chapter 5) which records that the worshippers of the Philistine god Dagon took care not to tread on the threshold of his temple, and the curious verse in Zephaniah (chapter 1) in which God vows to punish everyone who leaps on (or over) the threshold.

Frazer suggested that the function of the keepers of the threshold was to prevent people from treading on it. In the 19th century in Syria it was still considered unlucky to tread on the threshold of a mosque or a saint's shrine. The great 13th century traveller Marco Polo reported that each door of Kublai Khan's palace at Peking was guarded by men whose duty was to see that no one trod on the threshold in entering, and to punish anybody who did. Another traveller in the Far East at the same period said that anyone who touched the threshold of the hut or tent of a Tartar chieftain was liable to be put to death. It was equally considered a crime to tread on the threshold of the gate of the palace from which the caliphs of Baghdad held sway.

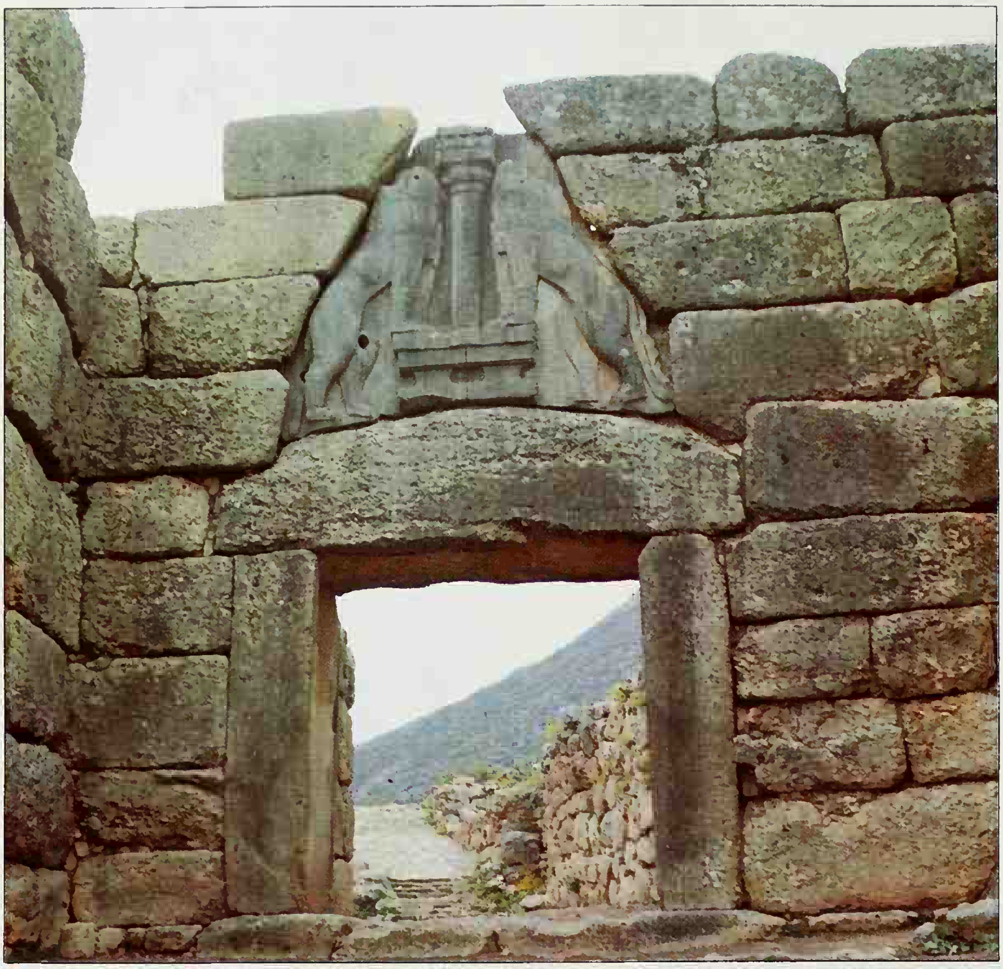
Frazer quoted several curious cases from 19th century England of farmers burying a premature calf under the threshold of a cowshed to prevent the other cows from giving birth prematurely. In Yorkshire, for instance, the traditional method was to remove the threshold, dig a deep hole there and bury the corpse of the calf on its back with its legs sticking up, then filling in the hole and replacing the threshold.

Arnold van Gennep pointed out, in *The Rites of Passage*, that the key to much magical and religious reverence, not merely for the threshold which must not be profaned by treading on it, but for the whole doorway, is the idea of passing through a door or gate or portal of any kind as a transition from one realm or condition to another. 'The door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of a temple. Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world. It is an important act in marriage, adoption, ordination, and funeral ceremonies.'

Arch of Triumph

The Roman arch of triumph seems originally to have been a portal of this sort. A general returning to the city after a successful campaign passed through the arch as part of a rite of separating himself from the enemy world outside and returning to the world of Rome. The symbolism of transition is expressed nowadays at military weddings when the newly married couple pass through an arch of swords as they leave the church, as a sign of their entry into the community of the regiment.

Some doorways, as in Rome, are believed to be the domain of gods or spirits. In central



A. J. Huxley

The threshold, which marked the transition from one state of existence to another, might be emphasized by guardian statues: the Lion Gate, the main entrance to the fortified city of Mycene, dating from the 14th century BC, is surmounted by two great limestone lions

India the threshold was said to be the seat of the goddess Lakshmi. Others are guarded by statues, frequently of hybrid and monstrous creatures, such as sphinxes in Egypt, winged bulls in Mesopotamia, dragons in China. The main doorways of palaces, temples and churches are embellished with decorations or emphasized with porches or other architectural features to mark their importance as gateways to another world.

On a smaller scale, the same treatment is often applied to the main door of a house, and because it must not be polluted tradition says that a corpse must be removed through the back door or a window, or that women who are pregnant or menstruating must only be let in through the back door. In many farms and houses in the countryside, the front door is scarcely ever used, except on important and formal occasions. All everyday coming and going takes place through the back door, a faint reflection of the old reverence for the portal and its threshold. (See also HOUSE; RITES OF PASSAGE.)

FURTHER READING: J. G. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament* vol 3 (Macmillan, 1918); A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Routledge, 1960).

THRONE MYSTICISM

'IN THE YEAR that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory".' (Isaiah 6.1-3.)

This quotation from one of the major Old Testament prophets, and the related vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1.1-26; see EZEKIEL), illustrate the visionary tradition of beholding the majesty of the Lord upon an exalted throne. This tradition goes back to earlier prophets, like Micaiah who declared to King Ahab: 'I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left' (1 Kings 22.19). It was no doubt indebted to ancient Near Eastern forms and patterns of kingship. These records of prophetic visions provided the basis of the visionary and ecstatic forms of early Jewish mysticism.

The more rationalist thinkers also concerned themselves with these passages, since they raised a basic problem of theology and religious philosophy – that of anthropomorphism. Were these visions, if taken literally, not gross and crude heresies rather than expressions of mystical spirituality? Many of the great medieval Jewish thinkers discussed these questions and suggested various solutions: the biblical accounts were allegorical figures of speech; or perhaps God created visible forms of glory in order to enable mortal eyes to behold a reflection of the splendour of the invisible Godhead.

But in the circles of visionary mystics these philosophical analyses played a minor role. The earlier Jewish mystics cultivated an ecstatic kind of mysticism which taught ways of achieving the visionary experience of the throne by way of the chariot or *merkabah*. This is therefore known as merkabah or throne mysticism, distinct from later forms of Jewish mysticism, which were largely speculative. (See MERKABAH.)

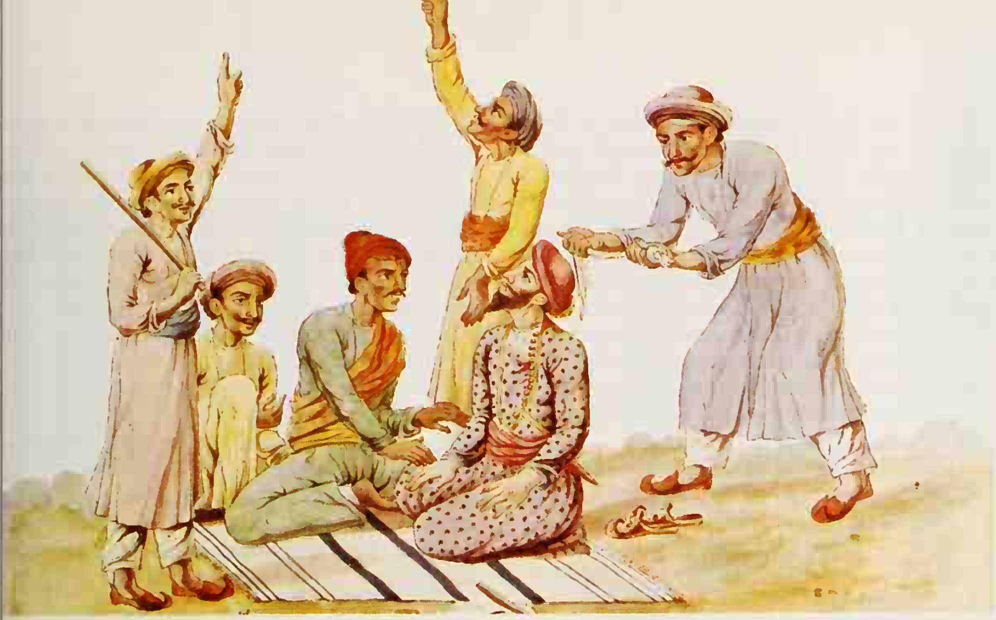
THUGS

THESE ROBBERS and ritual murderers in India strangled their victims as sacrifices to the goddess Bhavani, a form of Kali, the Hindu goddess of terror and destruction. They believed that the goddess herself had founded their organization and had taught her worshippers the art of throttling, using a clay dummy for purposes of demonstration (see KALI). They are first mentioned in the 12th century but their history probably goes back much further, and some of them maintained that their rituals were portrayed in carvings of the 8th century in the caves at Ellora in Hyderabad.

The thugs had a secret language of their own and a system of secret signs. Their children were brought up to the craft and sometimes the children of murdered victims were adopted into the cult. Preying principally on travellers, a gang of thugs would join a party of traders or pilgrims and accompany them, perhaps for weeks, until they found a safe opportunity to kill them.

Apprentice thugs were taught the art of choosing suitable victims, gaining their confidence and luring them to a convenient place of execution, and strangling them in the prescribed manner. They would approach a victim from behind, pass a length of cloth round his neck, jerk it tight and relax it, whispering to the goddess to come and watch. Then the noose was tightened and relaxed again, and the summons to the goddess repeated, and finally the victim was throttled to death – slowly so that Bhavani could enjoy his agonies.

The corpse was then mangled, the legs disjointed, the face cut and disfigured, the body slashed and gutted. Burial of the body was followed by a solemn feast, sometimes held on the grave. The stranglers sat on a sheet or blanket, near which were the sacred pickaxe of the goddess and an offering of silver. Sugar was poured into a hole in the ground and a prayer spoken to the goddess, asking her to reward her faithful followers with loot. Holy water was sprinkled on the pickaxe and those who had



British Museum

A thug prepares to strangle a victim with a length of cloth, as a sacrifice to Bhavani, while his attention is distracted by others in the band: 19th century Indian painting

committed the murder ate a little of the sugar from their hands.

Before an expedition, a sheep was sacrificed before an image of the goddess, which was black and smeared with blood. Flowers, fruit and cakes were also offered to her, and near her effigy stood images of a snake and a lizard, and the tools of the thug's trade – noose, knife and pickaxe.

On initiation into the society each member was given a pickaxe, the tool with which graves were dug. Each band of thugs carried a sacred pickaxe, a symbol of the goddess in which something of her power resided. The pickaxe, which had been passed seven times through the fire to consecrate it, was treated with awed respect and solemn oaths were sworn over it. If it was dropped by its bearer, either his death or the break-up of the gang would certainly follow within a year.

Though the thugs worshipped a Hindu goddess, many of them were Moslems, especially in the Delhi area, where they held in reverence a famous Moslem holy man of the 14th century in Delhi, Nizam-ud-din Auliya, whom they believed to have been one of the founders of thuggee.

Instruments of the Goddess

Sir William Sleeman, a British army officer and administrator who took a leading part in suppressing thuggee, said that a thug thought of his human victims much as a priest of Jupiter must have thought of the sacrificial oxen. 'He meditates his murders without any misgivings, he perpetrates them without any emotions of pity, and he remembers them without any feelings of remorse. They trouble not his dreams, nor does their recollection ever cause him inquietude in darkness, in solitude, or in the hour of death.'

Though strangling was their preferred method of murder, the thugs sometimes poisoned or drowned their victims or burned them alive. Women were not acceptable offerings to the goddess and men following certain trades were also in theory exempt from the attentions of the thugs, but by the 19th century at least many of them had become indiscriminate killers, and some of them attributed their downfall to this disregard of their rules.

In the 1830s the British authorities waged what almost amounted to a war against the thugs. Many of them were killed in action and by 1837 more than 3000 had been captured, of whom over 400 were hanged. By about 1860 they had been almost entirely wiped out, and the last known thug was hanged in 1882.

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THUNDERBIRD

Hamlyn Group

The widespread belief in the thunderbird, a gigantic winged creature responsible for storms, is connected with the fear that the fertility of the earth might fail for lack of rain: carved wooden thunderbird from Vancouver Island

IN THE PAST it was widely believed that birds were connected with the sun, wind, thunder and lightning. As aerial creatures seen ascending into the heavens, they were associated with the celestial powers and particularly with those controlling the weather. For this reason birds were often regarded as in various ways responsible for rain and the conditions which make life possible for man and the plants and animals on which he depends.

Since in many parts of the world outside the tropics migratory birds appear in spring, it was assumed that they were in some way responsible for the increasing warmth and fertility or, at least, in league with the powers responsible for favourable weather. The mysterious appearances and disappearances of migrating birds stirred the primitive imagination, and mythical birds were endowed with powers beyond those of any known species; commonly these birds were thought to be gigantic. Birds fan the air with their wings, and it was therefore supposed that storms and tempests were caused by huge winged creatures. And as some make drumming, booming and clattering noises with their wings, voices or bills, primitive folk supposed that thunder was caused in some such way by invisible, supernatural, monstrous birds.

Thus belief in a thunderbird, sometimes also conceived as a fire bird, lightning bird or storm bird, became widespread. Such birds could be regarded as beneficent because fire is useful to man and thunder showers foster fertility, but they could also be viewed with fear and awe because lightning can be destructive, killing men, shattering trees and setting forests on fire. Moreover, as giant birds were thought to act as the steeds of the gods, some of whom were not always friendly to man, their nature and activities might have an important bearing on human welfare.

The Flapping of Great Wings

In North America the thunderbird was pictured differently by various tribes. The Hareskin Indians spoke of a huge bird which spent the winter in the land of the dead with other migratory birds and beasts, returning with the warm weather. When it shook its tail thunder was heard, and lightning was the flashing of its eyes. At Eneti, in Washington state, a face said to represent the thunderbird was carved on a rock; the Indians believed that rain could be caused by shaking the rock and so arousing the anger of the thunderbird. According to the Dakotas, it was the parent thunderbird which made thunder; it was wise and did no harm, but the young were irresponsible and might cause destruction. These Indians claimed to have killed a thunderbird, and to have discovered that it had a man's face with a nose like an eagle's beak.

On the north-west coast the thunderbird was thought of as an eagle with an extra head on its abdomen; it was huge enough to be able to carry off whales. A story told how two hunters saw an enormous bird rise from a lake with the sound of thunder and then sink back with a terrific roar. An early traveller recorded that the Hurons regarded thunder as a large bird because a similar noise, on a smaller scale, was made by a bird like a swallow. In British Columbia the Indians likened the thunderbird to the ruby-throated hummingbird. The sound made by the hummingbird's wings probably suggested the connection with thunder, while its red throat feathers associated it with lightning.

In West Africa the spirit of lightning, So, is a flying being partaking of the nature of a god. Thunder is caused by the flapping of his wings and he casts lightning from the dark clouds. The image of the Nigerian thunder god is placed between two poles, on which are placed representations of birds. Among many Bantu tribes an image of a bird is placed on huts to ward off lightning; its form may vary from that of a flamingo to that of a bird of prey. Stone effigies of birds found at the ancient town of Zimbabwe have a crocodile or serpent carved at the base, suggesting that the powers of heaven and earth respectively were symbolized, as in some Asian cultures. In southern Africa the lightning is said to be a bird, brown or white-necked like the fish eagle. Persons struck by lightning are said to have been scratched by its claws. The Luyia in Kenya say that a huge red cock lives up in the clouds. He sends lightning when he shakes his wings and thunder is the sound of his crowing.

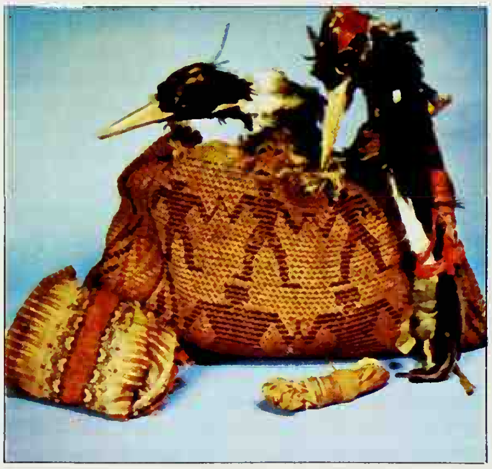
In Asia the thunderbird is widely associated with rain. The forest Tungus of north-east Asia say that thunder is caused by the rustling of a mighty bird's wings. Ancient Chinese literature reveals belief in thunderbirds: the pheasant is prominent in these traditions, probably because pheasants make a thudding noise when they flap their wings, and carry red markings on their heads. Young people in China used to perform springtime dances, in the course of which they imitated pheasants and flapped their arms to induce rain to fall. The connection between the bird and fertility also appears from the fact that in Chinese the word or character representing the sounds made by a pheasant also signified the noise of thunder and the 'agitation of a woman as she becomes pregnant'.

The Chinese thunder god, Lei Kung, is thought to have been originally a bird, possibly an owl. He is represented with a man's body, blue and hideous; he has a beak, wings and talons, and carries a wooden mallet, with which he beats a number of drums hung around him. He may carry a dagger or be shown shooting the arrows of lightning. The Japanese thunder god is also shown festooned with drums. In northern Asia tribal drums are painted with pictures of birds and frogs; as in other areas the drums are beaten, imitating thunder, to induce rain to fall.

The diver (see DIVER) is associated with rain in Europe, Asia and North America because of its close connection with water. Its cry is said to foretell rain and the Thompson Indians of British Columbia therefore imitate its call to make the rain fall. Belief in the efficacy of imitative magic extends to Mexico, where the Tarahumare Indians perform dances imitating the courtship antics of the turkey: they assume that as the gods grant the prayers of the bird, expressed in its dances, by sending rains, so they too must dance like the turkey to bring fertility to the countryside.

Imitative rain magic was also performed in Europe: near Dorpat in Estonia a man would climb a tree and rattle on a kettle, simulating the noise of a woodpecker drumming on a branch. The drumming noise which the bird makes with its bill as it hammers on a tree has been regarded from ancient times as rain magic, mimicry of thunder in order to create thunder and cause a downpour, a belief which still survives (see WOODPECKER).

A Potawatomi 'thunder war medicine bundle' from the Great Plains includes two stuffed birds. Birds were associated with thunder in America, Africa, Asia and Europe; these thunderbirds 'could be regarded as beneficent because fire is useful to man and thunder showers foster fertility, but they could also be viewed with fear and awe because lightning can be destructive'



Museum of the American Indian

Enemy of Snakes

In southern Asia the thunderbird belief appears to be superseded or obscured by the concept of a solar bird dominating a creature of the waters. The Hindu god Vishnu, who sometimes appears as a solar deity, rides the Garuda bird which is itself a solar divinity. In the art of Indo-China, Garuda is represented in immense stone sculptures as a winged and beaked human figure holding a snake in its taloned feet. This is interpreted as symbolizing the sun drying up the waters, represented by the Naga snakes, Garuda's traditional enemies. The Brahmanic god of the waters, celestial and terrestrial, Varuna, is depicted mounted on a monster, half-bird, half-reptile. Other gods also ride birds: Kama, the god of love, rides a parrot, Sarasvati, goddess of eloquence, a peacock (see PEACOCK). The immense birds of Near Eastern mythology such as the Simurgh and the Roc (see ROC), and even the huge birds of Irish legend, appear to have some affinity with the mythical birds further east.

The concept of opposing powers, celestial and terrestrial, is also found in Europe where the design of an eagle holding a snake or perched on an aquatic creature appears in ancient art. In Greece Zeus, the Thunderer, was symbolized by an eagle, and he disguised himself as an eagle in order to abduct Ganymede, the son of King Tros. The myth of celestial and terrestrial powers in conflict is very ancient. Among the Hittites there was a story describing the conflict between the weather god and the dragon (see HITTITES). In various forms this myth is represented in many cultures, including our own, for the legend of St George and the Dragon may be regarded as a variant.

(See also BIRDS; EAGLE.)

E. A. ARMSTRONG

Thyrsos

Ivy-twined staff tipped with a pine cone, or sometimes with a bunch of grapes and vine leaves, which was an attribute of the Greek god Dionysus and was carried by his worshippers: ivy was the plant of Dionysus and the phallic pine cone was an emblem of fertility and immortality; the grapes and vine leaves marked the god's link with wine and intoxication.

See DIONYSUS.

Tiamat

Monstrous personification of the sea in Babylonian mythology: from her mingling with the fresh waters the first generation of the gods was born; she threatened to destroy the gods but was killed by Marduk, the god of Babylon, who fashioned the universe from her body and created mankind from the blood of the leader of her army.

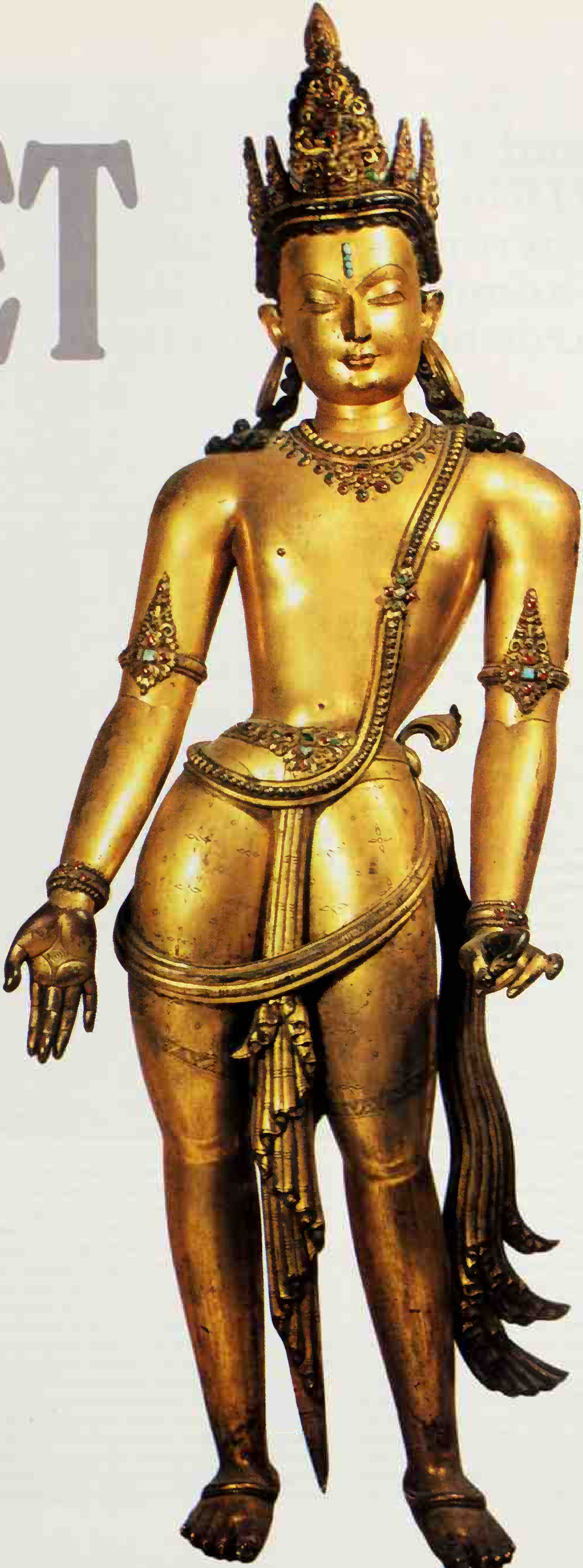
See CREATION MYTHS; MARDUK.

TIBET

Marco Polo records that by their extraordinary powers, Tibetan lamas at the Mongol court could make the Khan's cup rise spontaneously from the ground to his mouth, thus convincing him that their religion was superior to Christianity

IN 1950 THE CHINESE invaded Tibet, and the following year took Lhasa and imposed Communism on the country by force. The Dalai Lama was forced to flee in 1959, and by 1982, of the 3,500 original monasteries, only thirteen were left. Following the end of the so-called Cultural Revolution in 1979, the Chinese authorities asked the Dalai Lama to consider returning to his country from exile. He sent delegates to investigate conditions in Tibet, and the population turned out in their thousands to greet them. Clearly, despite the official ban on their religion, the Tibetans had preserved their faith in their personal lives, and evidence of this produced a distinct waning of support by the Chinese for the Dalai Lama's return (see DALAI LAMA). Nowadays, the Tibetan religion and culture survive only in the Himalayan frontier lands, where the people are Tibetan by race but, for various historical reasons, are not politically part of Tibet.

Mainly thanks to several scholarly officials, chiefly British, and to European scholars who have visited Tibet and studied its art, religion and literature during the course of this century, far more is now known about the life and religion of Tibet than is popularly imagined. The first European to write about the religious life of Tibet was Ippolito Desideri, a Jesuit missionary-priest, who lived happily in Lhasa from 1716 to 1721, saying mass regularly in his rooms at the great Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Sera. He learned classical as well as spoken Tibetan (they relate to one another rather as do Latin and Italian) and was thus able to engage in friendly written and oral disputation with his hosts. His description of Tibetan life and religion (*An Account of Tibet*) remains a classic to this day. While true to his own faith, he willingly recognized the merits of Tibetan religion. 'Not only do the Tibetans possess treatises and codes about contemplation, but they obey them. I have already said that during two months of the year the Lamas hold conferences, preach and give instruction to the monks in their monasteries. Others retire to some solitary place and pass the time in



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A Jesuit who visited Lhasa in 1716 held the Tibetan faith to be 'wrong and pestiferous' - yet admitted that it led men towards heroic perfection

Victoria and Albert Museum

Tibetan religion is basically Buddhist, incorporating elements from the indigenous, more primitive, religion of Bon; a principal feature is belief in Bodhisattvas, who may be devotees on the road to Buddhahood, or Great Beings who themselves chose to be reborn into the world to help suffering creation *Above right* The lesser Bodhisattva Vajrapani, wielder of the thunderbolt, gracious to the faithful and terrible to the impious: 5th or 6th century AD *Previous page* The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, national god of Tibet, was believed to become incarnate as each succeeding Dalai Lama: gilt copper figure of the 16th or 17th century

peace and tranquil contemplation, while others withdraw from the world and devote themselves entirely to profound and subtle contemplation. If one considers what I have stated about Tibetan religion, although I believe the articles of faith to be absolutely wrong and pestiferous, yet the rules and directions imposed on the will are not alien to the principles of sound reason; they seem to me worthy of admiration as they not only prescribe hatred of vices and inculcate battling against passions, but what is more remarkable, lead man towards sublime and heroic perfection.'

Not until the end of the 19th century did another European attempt a serious evaluation of Tibetan religion. Even before going to Tibet, L. A. Waddell, a British member of the Indian Medical Services, made good use of local informants in Darjeeling on the Tibetan frontier, amassing much detailed information about popular Tibetan religion, especially charms, oracles, magical rites, prayer-flags and other religious symbols, as well as about more serious religious beliefs. His work, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, remains an important reference book. However, he had an excessive loathing for 'priestcraft' and Tibetan religion continually reminded him of Catholicism. He writes of Tibet as subject to its 'Dalai Lamaist Pope' and of its 'Lamaist priestly domination', for which he never has a good word. His general opinion of Tibetan religion is therefore far different from that of the saintly Desideri. 'The bulk of Lamaist cults,' writes Waddell, 'comprise much deep-rooted devil-worship and sorcery, which I describe with some fulness. For Lamaism is only thinly and imperfectly varnished over with Buddhist symbolism, beneath which the sinister growth of poly-demonist superstition darkly appears.' It was Waddell who popularized the unhappy term 'Lamaism', which had the same connotation for him as 'Papism' once had in England. His information, culled at a very popular level, is relatively accurate, but he simply never made contact with higher religious practice. The books of Sir Charles Bell, for many years British representative to Tibet, show a great progress, especially in the first-hand information they contain and in their serious attempt at a historical presentation of Tibetan religion.

However, the main incentive for modern Tibetan studies in the West derives from the travels and writings, the editions and translations of Tibetan works, which are the main fruits of the long life of Professor Giuseppe Tucci of Rome. He made eight expeditions in western and central Tibet between 1930 and 1948, and his discoveries brought to light whole past centuries of Tibetan art, literature and learning. From 1946 onwards other European scholars of Tibetan and Sanskrit, and of Tibetan and Chinese, although still a small select band, have done their share of research and writing, so that by now the history of Tibetan civilization, particularly relating to its religious and cultural connections with India on the one hand and its political connections with China on the other, is by no means unknown.

An Imported Faith

Buddhism became gradually established in Tibet from the 7th century AD onwards. The beginnings were slow, rather like the progress of Christianity in the British Isles about the same period, since those who practised the old indigenous religion, often supported by local chieftains, resisted the new faith. The Yarlung line of kings are represented with few exceptions as being its leading early patrons, but it is now historically certain that most of them continued to support the ancestral religion, while sometimes encouraging the founding of Buddhist temples and small monastic foundations.

Little is known with certainty of pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion, but it certainly comprised a cult of the king as a divine being, and special funeral rites involving the immolation of chosen companions together with the deceased king. There is mention of this rite being practised as late as 800 AD. The early religion also included the cult of local gods, especially mountain gods and warrior gods, and rites of sacrifice which were performed when special oaths were taken. This old Tibetan religion is often referred to by Western scholars as 'shamanism', and there were doubtless shamanistic elements, especially in the sense that some priests, through the practice of trance, might 'visit' or identify themselves with the divinities with which they were in special contact (see SHAMAN).

The assassination of the last of the Yarlung kings in 842 reduced the country to political chaos and so caused a further set-back to the introduction of Buddhism. However, new initiatives were taken in western Tibet by the descendants of the Yarlung dynasty, who established three small kingdoms there. From the 10th until the end of the 12th century trained Tibetan monks and scholars made continuous visits to India and Nepal, collecting and translating all the Indian Buddhist literature they could find. Central and eastern Tibet began to take an interest again, thanks to local aristocratic families who saw political advantage in supporting the new religion. Certainly Buddhism presented itself as a much higher culture than anything the Tibetans had possessed hitherto. Not only was a whole new written style developed in order to make possible the translation of obscure Sanskrit philosophical and religious terms, but this same Buddhist form of literature became the model for all Tibetan literature whatsoever. Thus when the representatives of the pre-Buddhist religion, known as *Bon* (perhaps simply meaning 'indigenous'), came to record their traditions, they inevitably made use of the new Buddhist vocabulary and introduced into their own teachings all kinds of Indian Buddhist doctrines.

High and Low Buddhism

During the last period of Buddhism in India (8th to 12th centuries) there were generally two kinds of religious practisers, the celibate monks who lived together in well-established monasteries, following a religious rule that went back to the earliest Buddhist period (5th century BC and onwards), and the yogis, who lived a much

Since Tibet became part of the People's Republic of China in 1951, practice of its religion survives only in surrounding regions and refugee communities: prayer flags stream from a *stupa* near Katmandu, Nepal, as trumpets are blown in a ceremony to welcome the Year of the Iron Pig

Spectrum Colour Library

freer life and might be either celibate or married. The yogis, with their greater religious freedom, were able to introduce the later theories and practices known as 'tantric' (see TANTRISM). They used as special means of invocation magical spells and formulas; they also employed symbolic cosmological designs called mandalas (see MANDALA), impressive initiation ceremonies, special forms of violent yoga (as still practised nowadays by some groups of non-Buddhist Indian yogis), and sometimes a particular kind of sexual yoga. Some of these yogis also practised everyday magic, for a fee placing curses on enemies, locating lost items or causing rainfall. All these higher and lower forms of Buddhism gradually entered Tibet, and some of them easily combined with Bon practices. From the first, Indian Buddhists seem to have adopted local gods as converted 'defenders' of their own, higher religion, and this process continued quite naturally in Tibet, where the pantheon was already quite large.

However, the main strength of the new religion lay in its scholarly and its higher religious aspects. Tibetan religious life was deliberately modelled on the Indian Buddhism of the 10th to 12th centuries AD. This included organized monastic life with its highly developed systems of philosophy and logic, complex forms of liturgy, disciplined behaviour and meditational practice, and the encouragement of literature, architecture and religious painting and iconography. When Buddhism disappeared from India about 1200 AD, the Tibetans were already its full inheritors. The Tibetan Buddhist canon, which reached its final state during the first half of the 13th century, comprises all the known Buddhist literature developed in India from the 1st century AD onwards, as well as part of the still older literature. It is arranged in two parts, known as the Kanjur, or translated (Buddha-) word, and the Tenjur, or translated treatises. The Kanjur, subsequently published in 108 large volumes, contains everything traditionally regarded as 'revealed' teachings (the word of Buddha). The Tenjur, subsequently published as 225 large volumes, contains translations of commentaries, exegetical literature and discourses by Indian Buddhist monk-scholars and yogis.

The pioneer discoverer of this wealth of Tibetan literature was a Hungarian traveller and scholar, Alexander Csoma de Körös. For years he lived like a monk in a small remote Tibetan monastery in the Himalayas, compiling a dictionary and cataloguing the contents of the Tibetan canon. His dictionary was published in 1834. His linguistic work was carried forward by another Hungarian, H. A. Jäschke, who likewise lived for years in the Himalayas, always under hardship, often in utter poverty. The chief fruit of his self-sacrificing labours was a Tibetan-English dictionary, first published in 1881, which remains an important standard work.

Reincarnating Lamas

The Tibetans have proved themselves great commentators and expositors of scripture, great compilers of manuals, great historians and biographers. Every religious order of Tibetan Buddhism has produced its own voluminous stock of writings, including the 'complete works' (*gsung-'bum*) of their leading scholars and prelates; these often run into many volumes. One order in particular, the Ka-gyu-pa, which goes back to the saintly yogi Mila Repa (1040–1123) and his religious master Mar-pa, developed a semi-popular religious literature in the form of delightfully written biographies combined with doctrinal teachings. Tibetan Buddhism is very much a religion of the written word, as well as of the mind and the heart.

There developed from Mila Repa's disciple,

A procession of monks symbolically escort the *persona* of the Dalai Lama back to Tibet, in the hope of regaining the country

sGam-po-pa, no less than six schools or sects, all based on his teachings. Some of these were connected with aristocratic families, whose members tended to be the leading lamas (lama simply means 'religious superior'). Others found their head lamas by making use of the traditional Buddhist belief in rebirth or reincarnation (see LAMAS). The process of rebirth is universal and inevitable – one is reincarnate as man or animal or tormented spirit, as a sufferer in hell or as a kind of petty god, depending upon one's good and evil acts. Release from this continual process is gained only by salvation in Buddhahood. Those who are especially aware of a religious vocation may take the vow to become eventually a perfect Buddha. Such a man becomes immediately a Bodhisattva (one who is intent on enlightenment) and, gradually overcoming his present imperfections, he advances through a series of lives towards final sanctity. This Buddhist path towards perfection remains perhaps the highest spiritual aspiration devised by man. The progress towards Buddhahood of Sakyamuni Buddha (6th to 5th centuries BC) was interpreted in this way, and at no time was it believed by his followers that he was the only Buddha. From the 1st century AD the 'career of the Bodhisattva path' was regarded by the followers of the 'Great Way' (*Mahayana*), which represents the 'great church tradition' of Indian Buddhism, as the ideal religious life, available to all, whether monk or layman, man or woman, who felt the workings of 'the thought of enlightenment' (see also BUDDHISM).

Having taken over all such doctrines and aspirations, the Tibetans would naturally assume that the head lamas of their monasteries were human Bodhisattvas on the gradual path to Buddhahood. Because of the merit they had already accumulated they were certain after death to be reborn in the human world as males, as this would present the best initial circumstances for religious progress. All one needed to do was to locate and identify the new child, and one would have rediscovered one's revered head

Eccentrics and holy madmen and mad women abound in Tibetan literature; even practical joking plays a part in the religious life

lama returned to this world.

The system was already under way by the 12th century amongst the Ka-gyu-pas, and gradually other Tibetan religious orders adopted it, usually where the interests of some great aristocratic family were not involved. As an example of a family monopoly, the succession in the important and powerful Sa-kya-pa order has continued through the centuries from uncle to nephew, down to the present day. By contrast the dGe-lug-pa or 'Yellow Hat' order, attached to no aristocratic family, soon adopted the system of reincarnation for the appointing of their chief lamas. These grand lamas (known in China and in the West as Dalai Lamas) have been the titular and sometimes the actual rulers of Tibet since the fifth Dalai Lama won political power in 1642.

As in medieval Europe, so in Tibet, religion and politics went close together. By offering political submission together with the services of their holy religion, the Tibetans managed to remain at peace with the murderous Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan, who ravaged every other country in central Asia except Tibet. One lama in particular, abbot of Drikung, so overwhelmed a marauding Mongol chieftain by his magical powers that he repented of his evil ways, and paid for the restoration of the three monasteries he had raided. The Mongols were certainly impressed by Tibetan religion, and in 1249 Godan Khan, to whom Tibet came as part of his heritage, appointed the abbot of Sakya his vice-regent in Tibet. Religious rule in the country dates from this time. Seeing the material benefits of allying themselves with the Mongols, who also offered a rewarding mission field, other religious orders began to seek Mongol patronage and to intrigue against Sa-kya.

Mutual jealousies amongst the various Tibetan groups at the Mongol court (from 1263 Kublai Khan was the effective Emperor of China) do not seem to have weakened the Tibetan religious hold on the Mongols. This spiritual conquest of a barbarian people is proof of the extraordinary ability of the great lamas of the day, who had to compete for Mongol favours against many other religious faiths: Christian (both Nestorian and Catholic), Moslem and Taoist, as well as the shamanism of the Mongols themselves. As for their magic, Marco Polo records that by their extraordinary powers they could cause the Khan's cup to rise spontaneously from the ground to his mouth, thus convincing him that their religion was superior to Christianity.

Even before the end of the Mongol dynasty in China in 1368, the hierarchs of Sa-kya were deprived of their rather feeble vice-royalty by a determined aristocratic layman named Chang-chub Gyal-tsen, who was closely connected with another religious order, the Phag-mo-gru branch of the Ka-gyu-pa. After his death in 1364 Tibet continued to remain independent of Mongol and Chinese encroachments for some 275 years, but it was internally divided by the mutual enmities of the main orders in league with leading aristocratic families.

But even this politically disturbed age produced scholars, contemplatives and poets, whose devout lives are portrayed in Tibetan historical works and indeed throughout Tibetan literature. For instance, in *The Blue Annals*, an English translation by G.N. Roerich of a religious history written by a famous Tibetan scholar named gZon-nu-dpal (1392-1481), there are many short biographies and anecdotes about Tibetan lamas, monks and yogis. One reads of the strict religious life of the Lama of Drikung and of that of the Karmapa Lama, who became spiritual adviser to the Emperor of China. Others studied religious texts and then withdrew to solitary meditation, acquiring spiritual and sometimes miraculous powers. Some described their experiences in poetry, and all of them were intent on transmitting their special knowledge to chosen disciples. There were others who were addicted to extreme asceticism, living naked in snow and ice, haunting graveyards, eating vile things and enduring all kinds of self-inflicted hardships; some of them gained great prestige and wealth from such a way of life.

Then there are the eccentrics and the holy madmen and mad women who abound in Tibetan literature. Even practical joking plays a part in the religious life: one story tells of a disciple who put on the dancing mask of the Lord of Death and chased his terrified teacher round the monastery by moonlight.

Tibetan religious life is hardly ever dull, and magical practices always played an important part. A certain lama of Drikung was famed in this way. Once a magician tried to transfer to him certain evils which were threatening the son of a local prince, but the lama's superior powers turned back the complex of spells upon the magician.

Killed by a Demon

A refugee worker describes the death of a young Tibetan woman

Suddenly the incense – or something else – took effect and Rinchin, who had been reclining against a bed-roll, sat bolt upright without assistance and began to talk in a low but very clear voice. At once the ayahs, who had by now reassembled, stopped their agitated chattering and seemed hardly to breathe...

I whispered an enquiry to the interpreter and he replied briefly that Rinchin had described her visions and concluded by affirming that a few months ago an Evil Spirit from Tibet had entered into her and she had known then that after the birth she would die.

Now the Lama anointed Rinchin's ears, eyes and nose with butter-fat, before going into a trance to attempt to exorcize the Evil Spirit. Within moments he had gone completely rigid as he sat cross-legged, his eyes open but blank and beads of sweat standing out on his face... Soon the Lama had gone so white and was sweating so hard and looking so odd that I feared he might die first. Two other Lamas now arrived, carrying the *Bardo Thödol* (a Buddhist scripture recited for the benefit of the dying and the dead) rolled up in two silver cylinders. These manuscripts were immediately unfolded and the monks began to chant them *sotto voce* in that indescribable Tibetan manner which has to be heard to be believed...

An hour later the interpreter came to tell us that Rinchin was dead.

Dervla Murphy *Tibetan Foothold*

The Yellow Hats

In the midst of political strife and all the extraordinary variety of religious practice, a new religious order, founded by the saintly and scholarly Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419), gradually grew in numbers and strength. During the first two centuries of its growth the dGe-lug-pa or 'Yellow Hats' remained largely uncontaminated by temporal power, and its simplicity, religious devotion and calm austerity gradually won for its monks a

Picturepoint

Travellers to Tibet often commented on the mingling of magic and mysticism in Tibetan Buddhism *Left* Tibetan magician: he works spells for his clients, besides dealing with unfriendly gods and demons – a survival of old shamanistic beliefs *Above* A feature of Tibetan worship is the use of prayer-wheels, cylinders containing mantras; both the mechanical repetition of the mantras and the turning movement itself conveyed a blessing, if turned from left to right, but 'demon-worshipping' Bon priests turned their wheels anti-clockwise

large measure of popular support. Then in 1578 the head lama of the dGe-lug-pa visited and befriended a Mongol chief, Altan Khan; he and his following proved ready converts. This head lama died in 1588, the third in the series of reincarnating lamas recognized by the Yellow Hats, and the first to use the title 'Dalai', meaning 'Ocean (of Wisdom)' given him by Altan. His successor was discovered in a grandson of Altan Khan, thus consolidating politically the relations between the Yellow Hats and an important Mongol tribe.

The now obvious political pretensions of the Yellow Hats provoked the older orders to violent opposition, and as a result the Mongols continually invaded Tibet in support of their favourite religious order. The next Dalai Lama, the 'Great Fifth', was supported by the Mongols with sufficient strength to win political control over the whole of Tibet from 1642 onwards, but his death in 1682 led to another period of political chaos. The Mongols and then the Manchu Emperor of China very soon interfered, and when the problems were finally resolved in 1721 Tibet emerged still subject to the rule of the Dalai Lama (or more often that of the high Tibetan ecclesiastical dignitaries who ruled in his name), but also as a religious protectorate of the Manchu emperors, who remained until their fall in 1911 Tibetan Buddhists by religion, and not Chinese Buddhists. For nearly two centuries they acted as patrons of many Tibetan monasteries. This unusual relationship, which ended in 1911, is the basis of the claim of Republican as well as Communist China that Tibet is politically part of China.

Desideri's appreciative comments on Tibetan higher religious life and Waddell's harsh words about devil-worship, sorcery and superstition represent the extremes of Tibetan religious practice. The higher religion of those who devote themselves single-mindedly to a purely religious and world-transcending goal (always a minority in any country and any culture) is fundamentally Buddhist. By strict control of all selfish tendencies and by the practice of concentrated meditation they seek to experience already in this life the joyful tranquillity which comes from such practice, and after death to pass into Nirvana (see NIRVANA).

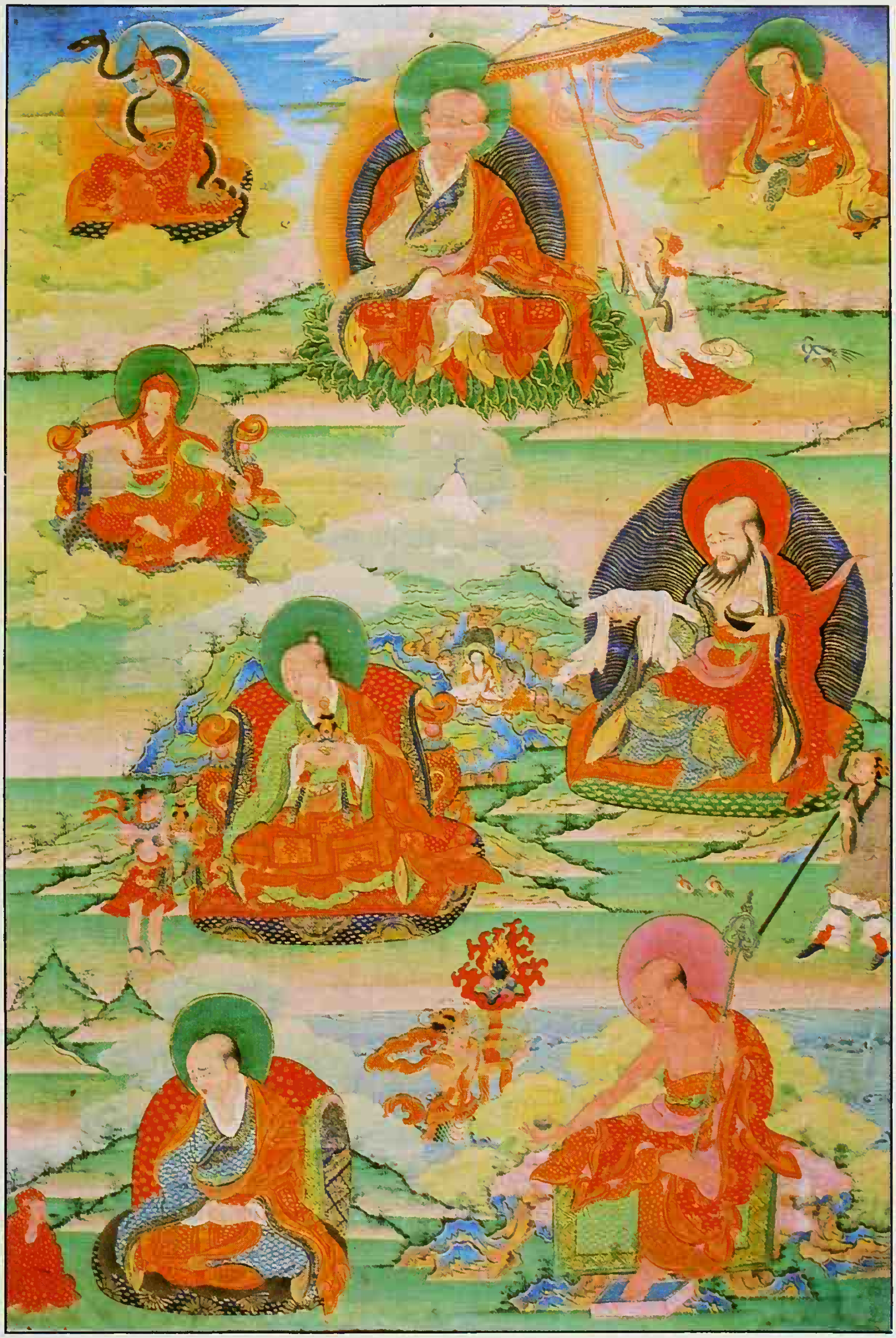
Gods, Demons and Magicians

The majority of Tibetans, monks as well as laymen, scarcely hope for such an achievement in the course of one lifetime. But they hope that their continual practice of good works, particularly generosity to religious houses and to all in need, will build up a sufficient store of merit for them to be reborn as humans again. This concept too is entirely Buddhist. However, in the course of their everyday lives they meet with obstructions, especially illness or economic ill-fortune, and for these they want antidotes. Buddhism teaches patience in such circumstances, for is not all life a transient passing show, of no real substance whatsoever? But since for practical purposes most men who live in the world must treat it as real, the Tibetans (like ourselves) try to remedy the causes of their misfortune and ensure their continual good fortune.

Because of the Tibetans' ancestral belief in local gods and demons, these are readily recognized as the cause of troubles. A local god may be angry because a house has been built on his territory without suitable propitiation ceremonies. A house god may be upset by a dirty hearth, or a local water spirit infuriated by refuse thrown into his stream. Throughout the centuries the Tibetans have called upon local religious practisers, including Buddhist lamas of the older religious orders, to deal with these local gods and demons by either quelling or placating them, whichever proves more efficacious. The Tibetans believe that some local magicians are able to control natural phenomena and especially to keep off hail, which sometimes destroys whole crops in Tibet just before harvest. They also believe them capable of turning the same rites which quell troublesome local gods against the personal enemies of their clients.

In their extreme forms it is easy to distinguish between genuine Buddhism and local superstitious religion, but in practice the two were so closely combined in Tibet as to form in most people's minds a single religion. So long as a man was attached to worldly affairs, he simply had to take local gods, and therefore local magicians, into account. But in so far as he was detached from life, as in the case of the sincere monk intent on religious perfection, or of any man

Five of the 16 apostles of Sakyamuni, the Buddha, appear in a Tibetan temple-hanging of the 17th or 18th century: Tibet was until recently ruled by priests, and the monasteries were storehouses of art and learning


Victoria and Albert Museum

approaching death, his religion became ever more purely Buddhist. Yet even so, Tibetan religion sometimes introduces extraordinary non-Buddhist elements. There is the terrifying rite of deliberate sacrifice of oneself to local demons, as performed by some ascetic yogis. There is also the amazing *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, by means of which a competent lama might guide the consciousness of the deceased towards some satisfactory form of rebirth. The regions through which he guided the frightened human consciousness were peopled with terrifying divinities, which may only be called Buddhist in so far as most of them had already been accepted into the Indian Buddhist pantheon before the Tibetans imported such doctrines.

DAVID SNELLGROVE

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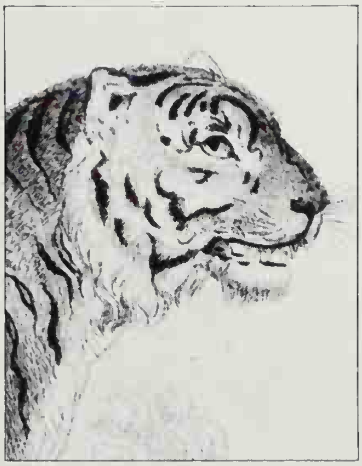
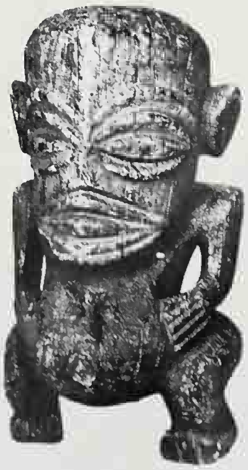
Tiger

Feared as a maneater and shape-shifter, and often regarded as a sensitive creature which must be treated with formal respect: in Sumatra apologies are offered to a maneating tiger, and its forgiveness asked, before it is killed; in Malaya tiger claws and whiskers are valued as charms and tigers are said to live in houses in their own village, where the roofs are thatched with human hair.



Tiki

Polynesian carving of a human figure, frequently worn round the neck as an amulet: the Maori said that the first hei-tiki was made for the goddess of childbirth by her father; also the name of the first man, created of red clay by the god Tane, or the phallus of Tane, or alternatively the name of the god who created the first man; tikis have become popular in the West as good luck charms.



TIME

Awareness of time has made man conscious that he is inexorably subject to decay, old age and death, and his reactions to this grim fact have been expressed in his religions: the myth of the Golden Age states the general human conviction that history is a process of decline, that things are worse than they used to be

THE MYSTERIOUS NATURE of time, as it is presented to human experience, has been described in a celebrated passage by St Augustine of Hippo (354-430). He writes in his *Confessions*: 'What then is Time? If no one asks me, I know; but if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not. Yet I say boldly, that I know that if nothing passed away, Time past were not; and if nothing were coming [into existence], a Time to come were not; and if nothing existed, Time present were not. These two Times, then, past and to come, how are they, seeing the past now is not, and that to come is not yet? But the present, if it were always the present, and never passed into Time past, would surely not be Time, but Eternity.'

The enigma of time is of fundamental importance, for time is one of the two dimensions of our consciousness, the other being space. We are aware of time through the change of phenomena presented to our senses; for, as Augustine saw, if the present pattern of our experience did not change, we should have no sense of time, but be in a state of timelessness or eternity. In other words, normal human consciousness consists of awareness of the three temporal categories: past, present and future.

The Consciousness of Time

On analysis, it is impossible for us at any given moment to define exactly what is the present. The 'here-now' of the present is an ever-moving point separating our past and future. Indeed, psychologically our 'present' includes our immediate past experience and anticipates the continuance of our experience into the immediate future. However, when we reflect on our experience over a longer period, we can distinguish more clearly what is 'past' and what is 'future', although the existential reality of what is past and future constitutes problems of great metaphysical subtlety and complexity.

Enigmatical though time is and replete with problems beyond the comprehension of most persons, it constitutes a factor that has profoundly affected the evolution of the human race. For man, in contra-distinction to all other species, is endowed with an acute time-consciousness which he has exploited with amazing results. Because man is so acutely aware of time, he is by nature a 'planner': he is forever drawing upon past experience in the present to provide for future needs.

This trait finds expression in the earliest evidence we have of mankind. For the Paleolithic peoples were tool-makers, and the making of a tool, for example, a stone axe, involves the anticipation of the future need of such an axe and busying oneself in the present to make it. Through the ability to anticipate and so provide for future needs, humankind has succeeded, since Paleolithic times, in dominating the world and eliminating or enslaving all animal competitors. The complex scientific and technological civilization which we now enjoy is a sophisticated product of our time-sense. And its range is enormous: from the planning of a nuclear power station to the taking out of an insurance policy, past experience is being utilized in the present to meet future contingencies. In short, the time-consciousness of men and women has been, and is, a primary cause of their success in the struggle for existence.

But this endowment has a kind of debit side. Men's and women's time-consciousness has not only enabled them to plan ahead to ensure their physical well-being; it has also made them acutely aware that they are subject to the flux of time that brings change, decay, aging and finally death to every form of life. Accordingly, every human being learns early in childhood to anticipate his or her own death. In this sense, it has been truly said that mankind has invented death. For whereas the animals suffer the experience of dying without the long anticipatory knowledge of mortality, men and women contemplate their end from the moment of their first discovery that all life dies.

This awareness of mortality, which stems from the ability to project oneself mentally into the future, produces in mankind a fundamental sense of insecurity. It prevents people from immersing themselves wholly in the enjoyment of present well-being. They ever fear that changing time will bring misfortune; and they know that it is surely bearing them towards that dread moment of personal extinction to which they have seen so many of their fellow-beings come.

This ambivalent endowment of acute time-consciousness has found expression in human history in a twofold quest for security. As we have seen, the complex structure of civilization is designed to ensure constant and adequate provision for the material needs of mankind. But beyond the satisfaction of these needs, the prospect of death has remained as the ultimate menace. Mankind's reaction to this grim fact has found expression in religion.

In Search of Security

It can be reasonably shown that all religions are basically concerned with the problem of security after death. The logic of experience has precluded any serious attempt to provide immunity from physical death in this life (the quest of some Taoist magicians in China to find an elixir of immortality is notable only for its persistence against all evidence of failure). But though forced to accept the inevitability of death, mankind has generally believed that some part of the personality survives physical disintegration and needs to be secured against post-mortem perils. In conceiving such security, mankind's fear of the destructive process of time is reflected in a variety of imagery expressive of the instinct to transcend time. Behind this imagery certain distinctive forms of belief and action can be discerned by the comparative study of religion.

What is undoubtedly the most primitive attempt, so far as thought and action are concerned, to gain everlasting post-mortem security from the destructive process of time occurred in ancient Egypt. There the elaborate mortuary ritual, including mummification, was designed to effect two things. By embalming the corpse, it was hoped that physical decomposition would be stopped and the body preserved intact for ever. Through the magical efficacy of the ritual 'Opening of the Mouth' it was believed that the ability to see, breathe and take nourishment was restored to the mummified remains, so that the deceased might live, together with his *ka*, a kind of double or second self, and revisited by his *ba*, an entity separated from the human body at death, in his 'house of eternity', the tomb, for ever. Arrangements were also made for the perpetual offering of food at the tomb

For whereas the animals suffer the experience of dying without the long anticipatory knowledge of mortality, men and women contemplate their end from the moment of their first discovery that all life dies

and it was hoped that the dead, revivified and immune from decay, and 'perfectly equipped' with magical spells, would be eternally secure, 'coming forth' each day to the portal of the tomb, to see the sun and feed on the mortuary offerings. The other purpose of the mortuary ritual was to assimilate the dead person to the god Osiris, and among the various virtues that would accrue from such assimilation was transcendence of time. This was achieved, as a text in the Book of the Dead shows, by magically incorporating time into one's own being. The dead person, who had become one with Osiris, exclaims: 'I am Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow' (see BOOK OF THE DEAD; EGYPT; MUMMIFICATION; OSIRIS).

Flight to Heaven

The idea of gaining immunity from the destructive flux of time by union with a supernatural being regarded as eternal, which lies behind this passage in the Book of the Dead, finds various forms of expression in many religions. It appears in a non-Osirian context in Egypt as far back as the Pyramid Texts. The dead pharaoh is imagined as flying up to heaven to join the sun god Re in his solar boat, in which the god daily crossed the sky; as Re's companion on this unceasing journey the pharaoh would be beyond temporal change.

In Christianity, the 'beatific vision', which constitutes the final reward of the redeemed, is an eternal communion of the individual soul with God. In the Apocalypse of St John, an attempt is made, in an esoteric imagery, to represent the transcendence of time in the eternity of worship. The four living creatures about the throne of God 'never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"' (chapter 4).

In Indian thought there is a similar conception of the effect of the individual's ultimate realization of Brahma: 'Verily, for him who knows thus, this mystic doctrine of Brahma, the sun neither rises nor sets. For him it is day for ever' – in other words, he is beyond time, whose passage is marked by the succession of day and night. Nirvana, in Buddhist imagery, is likewise a state beyond time's changing phenomena (see NIRVANA). The Buddha is represented as teaching: 'There, monks, I say there is neither coming nor going nor staying nor passing away nor arising. Without support or going on or basis is it. This indeed is the end of pain.'

'Know I Am Time'

Concern about time has not only expressed itself in religion by imagining states of beatitude beyond its range. Since man is so disturbingly aware of his subjection to time in this world, his religions reflect his preoccupation with its nature and the significance of its operation throughout the universe. This preoccupation has led to the deification of time among some peoples. The rich imagery of Hinduism provides examples that are both impressive in their dramatic portrayal and significant in their theological implication. In the famous *Bhagavad Gita*, which is one of the foundational documents of Hinduism, the god Vishnu, in his form of Vasudeva, is equated with time (see BHAGAVAD GITA; VISHNU).

This aspect of Vishnu is revealed in the culminating vision given to the prince Arjuna. At first Vishnu had revealed himself as the Creator and sustainer of the world. This was a revelation of the beneficent providence of the deity. Arjuna was impressed; but feeling that he had not seen all, he asks that a full revelation be made. His request is granted, but he is appalled by what he then beholds. Vishnu appears as a monstrous being, into whose awesome mouths, beset by hideous fangs, all forms of life are seen passing swiftly to destruction. And Vishnu announces: 'Know I am Time, that makes the worlds to perish, when ripe, and come to bring on them destruction.'

This account is significant both for the ambivalence of its concept of deity and its identification of the supreme deity with time. It reflects the Indian conviction that creation in the empirical world inevitably entails destruction, that life involves death, and that time governs this alternating rhythm that never ends. This Vishnavite theology is paralleled by a similar conception in Shivaism. The god Shiva (see SHIVA), on one side of his being, personifies the dynamic persistence of life, in all its teeming abundance and complexity of form, which is symbolized by the *lingam*, the mighty generative organ of the god. In his other aspect, he is Bhairava, 'the terrible destroyer' and Maha-Kala (great Time), and Kala-Rudra (all-devouring Time).

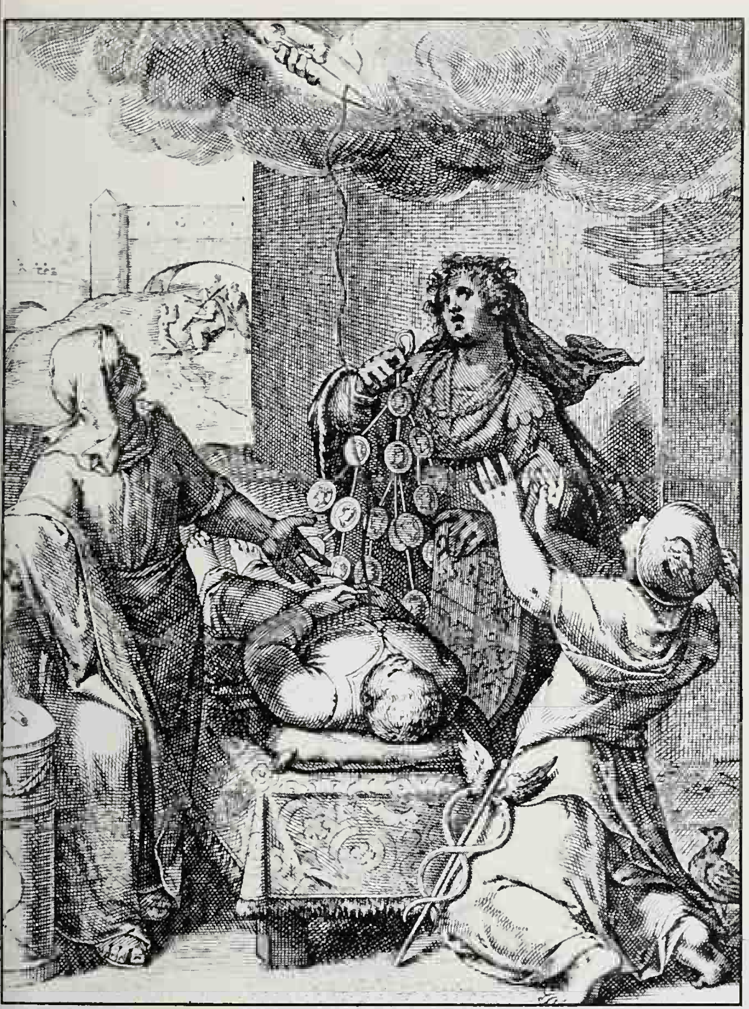
An even more remarkable conception is that of Kali, the goddess who personifies *kala* (time). She derives from the concept of Shiva's *shakti* or activating energy. Her iconography is horrific, being thus designed to portray the baleful nature of time. She is depicted as black in hue, and wearing a chaplet of severed heads; her many hands hold symbols of her destructive power – the exterminating sword, scissors that cut short the thread of life. Yet, like Shiva, her lord, from whom she emanates, Kali is of ambivalent character; for she also holds the lotus of eternal generation and her body is expressive of vigorous fecundity (see KALI).

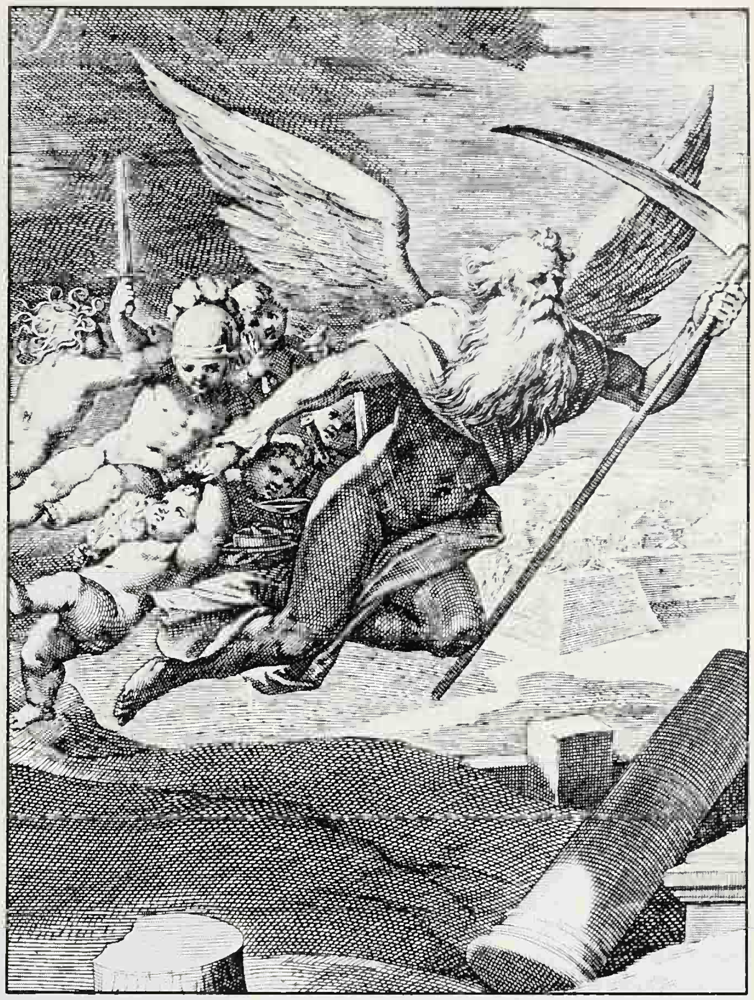
This deification of time is related to the Indian view that the empirical world is not ultimately real. It is a view designed to account for human destiny, and it involves a belief that time moves in cycles, which will be considered later.

The Infinite and the Finite

The ancient peoples of Iran had a god of time called Zurvan. How old this deification of time may be is unknown; there is some evidence that such a god was worshipped as far back as the 12th century BC. The earliest reliable information, however, comes from a Greek scholar, Eudemos of Rhodes, who explained in the 4th century BC that the well-known gods of Persian dualism, Ohrmazd and Ahriman, were derived by the Persians from time and space. Although the native Iranian writings which witness to this deification of time are comparatively late, they are very definite about the primordial nature of time and its religious significance. Thus in the *Rivayat* it is stated: 'it is obvious that, with the exception of Time, all other things have been created. For Time no limit is apparent, and no height can be seen nor deep perceived, and (Time) has always existed and will always exist...Time is both Creator and the Lord of the creation which it created.'

The Iranians, however, distinguished between two forms of Zurvan. Zurvan *akarana* was Infinite Time; Zurvan *daregho-chvadhata* was 'Time of the long Dominion' or Finite Time. This latter form of Zurvan represented the time that rules in this world, and which brings age, decay and death to all men. Although its dominion was believed to be long, extending to 12,000 years, it was finite. During the Sassanian





Man can never escape from death, and from early childhood he learns to anticipate his own end: 'he knows that Time is bearing him towards that dread moment of personal extinction which he has seen come to so many of his fellow beings' Above left 'Inexorable Fate' Above right 'Time changes, and we change with it', both engravings from the 16th-century book Fiacci Emblamata

period (226-637 AD), it appears that a cult of Zurvan developed which explained mythically the relation of Zurvan to Ohrmazd and Ahriman, who personified the opposing forces of good and evil in Zoroastrian dualism. According to this myth, Zurvan, as the primal being, desired to have a son who would create the universe. To this end he offered sacrifice for 1000 years. But before the millennium had been completed, Zurvan doubted for one brief moment the efficacy of the sacrifices. This momentary doubt had a fatal consequence; for it caused a second son to be conceived, who was to be Ahriman. And so, when the time was fulfilled, two sons were born to Zurvan: Ohrmazd, radiant with light; Ahriman, dark and foul. And when Ohrmazd created that which was good and beautiful, Ahriman countered by creating the evil and the ugly (see AHRIMAN; OHRMAZD; ZURVAN).

This Iranian deification of time appears to have been incorporated into Mithraism, which originated in Iran and gradually spread westwards into the Roman Empire (see MITHRAS). The form in which it found expression was strange but significant. Images were set up, in the cave sanctuaries of Mithras, of a nude man with a lion's head, the mouth being open in a menacing grimace. About the body a huge snake was entwined, and on the body the signs of the zodiac were carved. The monster was winged, and usually held a staff and keys. These images undoubtedly represented Zurvan *daregho-chvadhata*, with whom Ahriman appears to have been identified. Of the significance of such images in the cult of Mithras no certain evidence survives. But there is reason for thinking that they signified the sovereignty of 'Time of the long Dominion' over mankind in this world. It is possible that the devotees of Mithras thus recognized the cosmic dominion of time, but looked to Mithras for salvation from its baleful tyranny.

The influence of this form of Zurvan can be traced also in the figure of Phanes in the Greek Mystery religion known as Orphism (see ORPHEUS). The Persian concept of Infinite Time was also carried into the Graeco-Roman world, where it was identified with the supreme deity under the names of Cronus (see CRONUS) and Aion. In Egypt, the cult of Cronus was closely associated with that of Serapis (see SERAPIS) and, according to the Latin poet Macrobius, the cult image of Serapis in Alexandria symbolized this connection with time in a curious way. Serapis was portrayed accompanied by a three-headed monster: the middle head, that of a lion, represented time present; the wolf's head to the left signified time past, and that of a 'fawning dog' to the right depicted future time.

Janus, the ancient Roman god associated with beginnings (see JANUS), has sometimes, erroneously, been regarded as a time god, his two faces being interpreted as looking to the past and the future. So far as the Romans did deify time, it was in the form of Aeternitas, which derived from the Alexandrian concept of Aion. The most notable depiction of Aeternitas is in a bas-relief which adorns the base of the column of the Emperor Antoninus Pius in Rome. Aeternitas is represented as a heroic male figure, nude, with eagle's wings, and holding a serpent-encircled globe in his left hand: he bears the dead emperor and his wife Faustina to heaven.

The Sorrowful Weary Wheel

In contrast to these personifications of time, in other religions time has been regarded as an impersonal cyclic process, to which all life in this world is subject and obliged to conform. This view of time is linked with the idea of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls. It forms a basic concept of Hinduism and Buddhism, of Orphism and some forms of Gnosticism.

The impression that time is cyclic in its movement, and unceasingly reproduces the same pattern of events, is an obvious deduction to make from natural phenomena. The succession of day and night, the rotation of the seasons, and the movements of the heavenly bodies, all suggest that time moves in cycles. This view has sometimes led to a cynical evaluation of life such as

Picturepoint, London

The Timeless Gods

All we wax old and wither like a leaf.
We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon;
Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,
Black flowers and white, that perish; and the noon
As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.
A little fruit a little while is ours.
And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one
Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,
Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,
And stir with soft imperishable breath
The bubbling bitterness of life and death,
And hold it to our lips and laugh; but they
Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,
Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,
The lips that made us and the hands that slay;
Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to none,
Change and be subject to the secular sway
And terrene revolution of the sun.
Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.

Swinburne *Atalanta in Calydon*

finds expression in the well-known verses of the book of Ecclesiastes (1.9-10): 'What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said: "See this is new"? It has been already, in the ages before us.'

But it has been in connection with the idea of the transmigration of souls that the cyclic pattern of time has been most impressively utilized. The Indian sages taught that the individual self or *atman*, by mistaking the phenomenal world for reality and becoming attached to it, is involved in the stream of time. By the process of *samsara* or rebirth, the atman is continually reincarnated in this world in a form determined by its previous actions or *karma* (see KARMA). Hence it becomes subjected to an unceasing process of births and deaths, with all their attendant pain. To emphasize the unending misery of such existence and impel the self to seek salvation, India thinkers invented an elaborate chronology based on the cyclic nature of time. A *mahayuga* was conceived, – a period of 12,000 years, but these were reckoned as years of the gods, each being equal to 361 human years. One thousand of such mahayugas made up one *kalpa*, which represented one day of Brahma, and that one day spanned the whole period from the creation of a world to its destruction. On the dawning of the next day, Brahma creates the world anew and the dreary wheel of existence begins to turn for another kalpa, through which the unenlightened soul is doomed to a further succession of births and deaths. Both Hinduism and Buddhism claim to provide ways of salvation from this 'sorrowful weary wheel' of time.

The expression 'sorrowful weary wheel' actually comes from an Orphic text; for a similar view of the fate of the uninitiated soul was held in ancient Greece by the members of the Pythagorean and Orphic Mystery cults. Plato also conceived of the errant soul as having to endure a series of incarnations for 10,000 years before it could return to its former state of happiness. And the mysterious philosopher and poet Empedocles tells of having for 'thrice ten thousand seasons' wandered 'far from the blessed, being born throughout that time in the form of all manner of mortal things and changing one baleful path of life for another'. For those who thought thus, salvation was to break out from time's inexorable process, or, as it is eloquently phrased on an Orphic grave tablet by one who thought that he had achieved deliverance: 'I have flown out of the sorrowful weary wheel; I have passed with eager feet to the Circle desired.'

Time's Winged Chariot

To believe that the course of time is cyclical has been the more common view; but the idea that time's movement is linear has been a basic concept of four great religions – Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Both Judaism and Christianity (and the Islamic view has essentially followed the same pattern) equate the process of time with the unfolding of the purpose of God. This view finds expression in the Old Testament in what is virtually a philosophy of history. The main theme is the gradual revelation of Yahweh's providence for Israel, which starts with the call of Abraham (Genesis, chapter 22). Christianity took over this interpretation of the temporal process, but adapted it to its own recognition of Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah and of the Church as becoming the true Israel, consequent on the rejection of Jesus by historic Israel. From these basic notions there was gradually evolved the great synthesis of medieval Christianity, in which the destiny both of mankind and of its individual members were related in a time scheme that commenced with the Creation and would end with the Second Coming of Christ. The theme of this cosmic drama was the redemption of mankind after the Fall of its original parents, by the vicarious sacrifice on the cross of the incarnate Son of God.

This view of time has found significant expression in the division of its process into two parts, labelled respectively the era 'Before Christ' and the era *Anni Domini*, the 'years of the Lord'. In medieval iconography the end of time was symbolized by the catastrophic destruction of the world, and its replacement by a new and eternal order (see END OF THE WORLD). But the most impressive statement, as it is also the most concise, of the Christian view that God incorporates and transcends time is surely given in Revelation (chapter 22) when the glorified Christ is represented as saying: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.'

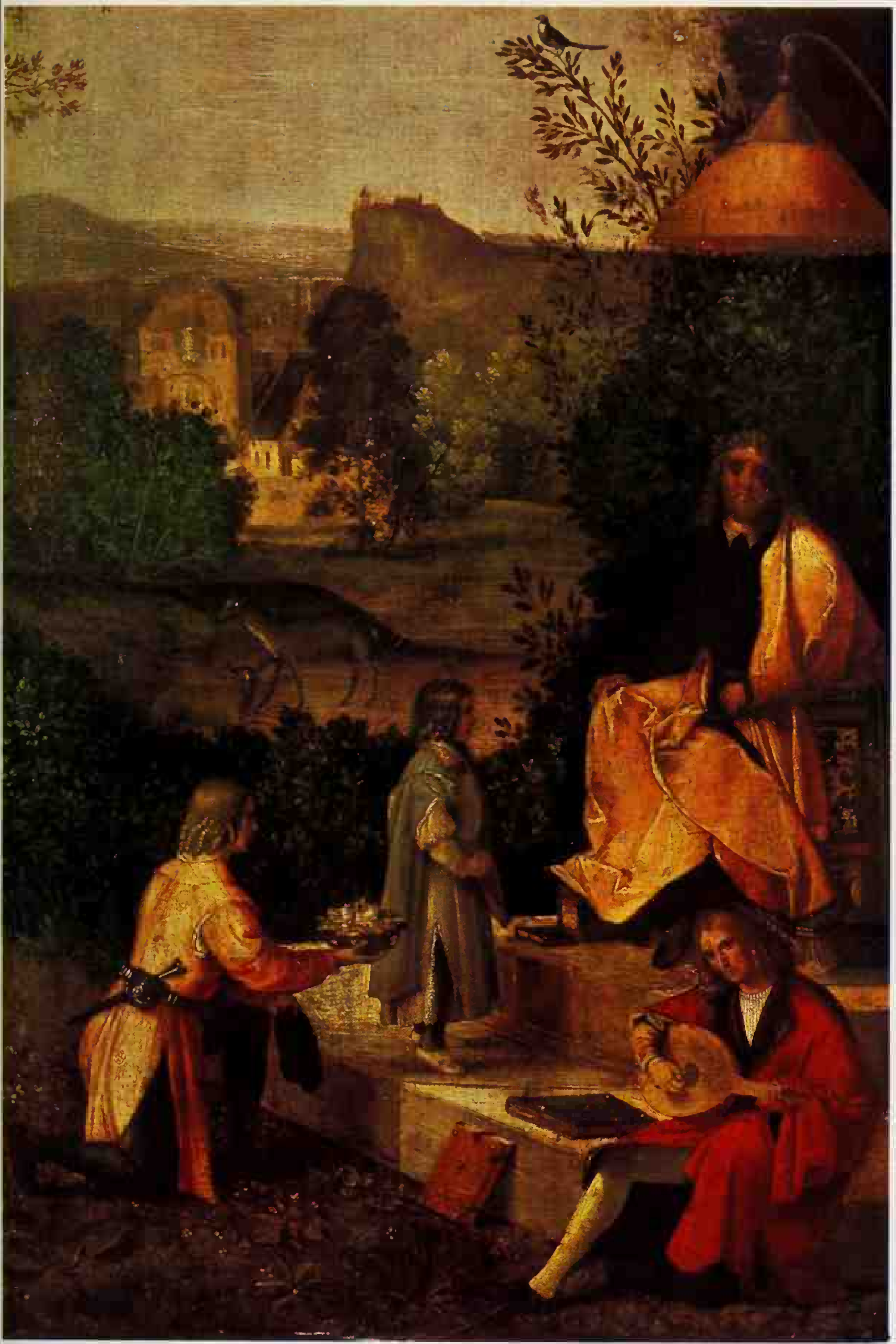
It is interesting, in conclusion, to notice briefly the evolution of the idea of Father Time. The Christian view of God precludes any deification of time, but it did not prevent its personification. In the Middle Ages there were two lines of tradition concerning human destiny which finally coalesced during the Renaissance period, in the figure of Father Time. One tradition was astrological, through which the image of the pagan god Saturn survived as a grim old man, armed with a sickle and hour-glass: symbols of the termination of human life. In the other tradition, Death was personified as a skeleton, armed with a scythe or dart, with which he gave the death-blow. These two figures were eventually fused into the figure of Father Time, complete with hour-glass and scythe. In the iconography of Western mythology his figure still symbolizes, perhaps a little vapidly, man's ancient association of time with death.

S.G.F.BRANDON

The Golden Age

Strictly speaking, the Greek myth was not of a 'Golden Age' but of a Golden Race which was the earth's first human population. Hesiod (c 700 BC) tells the story in his *Works and Days*. They lived when Cronus was king of the gods, and they lived like gods themselves, free from pain and toil and old age. The earth bore them its fruits untilled and death came to them gentle as sleep. Now they have become invisible spirits that watch over men and bring them prosperity. They were succeeded by a Silver Race, foolish, violent, and irreligious: their childhood lasted 100 years, but then they aged rapidly. They have become spirits of a lower order, the Mortal Blessed.

The gods next made a Bronze Race, out of ash trees, more stern and brutal still, who destroyed themselves and left no trace. They were the first to kill animals for food. Then the succession of metals and the moral decline was interrupted: the fourth race was that of the noble heroes who fought at Troy and elsewhere, and who now live in the Isles of the Blessed and are revered as demigods. But now we have an Iron Race, who are doomed to toil, suffering, and eventually destruction, as their wickedness increases and children begin to be already grey-haired at birth.



According to Hesiod, a Golden Race, the earth's first human population, lived like gods free from pain, toil and old age. In Roman times the era of the Golden Race became the Golden Age, an idyllic period far in the past, when man lived happily, simply and naturally: The Golden Age after Giorgione

National Gallery

The metal names do not have a single consistent significance. Of the Bronze Race, Hesiod says that their armour, tools and houses were of bronze, for there was no iron then. This evidently represents a memory of the 'Bronze Age' of our archeologists, which in Greece gave way to the Iron Age about 1100 BC. At the same time, the Iron Race's name is appropriate to its inhumanity, while gold and silver join up with bronze to form a scale of absolute value. (Iron, however, ranked as a precious, not a base metal.)

Thus the myth represents a compromise between abstract theory and a genuine memory of the past. The conflict shows itself again in the way the Heroic Age is accommodated between the Bronze and Iron Races. It has often been assumed that Hesiod was adapting a mythical scheme in which there were four races instead of five: Gold, Silver, Bronze, Iron, each worse than its predecessor. It may have been of oriental origin. Medieval Persian texts, which certainly contain some ancient material, tell how Zoroaster saw in a vision a tree with four branches, of gold, silver, copper and iron, and Ahura Mazdah explained to him that these were the four kingdoms of Iran that were to succeed one another, each worse than the last.

We recall, too, Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the book of Daniel (chapter 2) in which four successive kingdoms are represented by the gold, silver, brass, and iron and clay parts of an effigy in human form. The metal symbolism has been thought to point to Babylon, where alchemy was practised early and metals were assigned to each of the planets.

In India, there developed a theory of four world ages, of advancing badness and decreasing length, associated with different colours of Vishnu, though not with metals. Here too the last age is characterized by encroachment of old age upon youth.

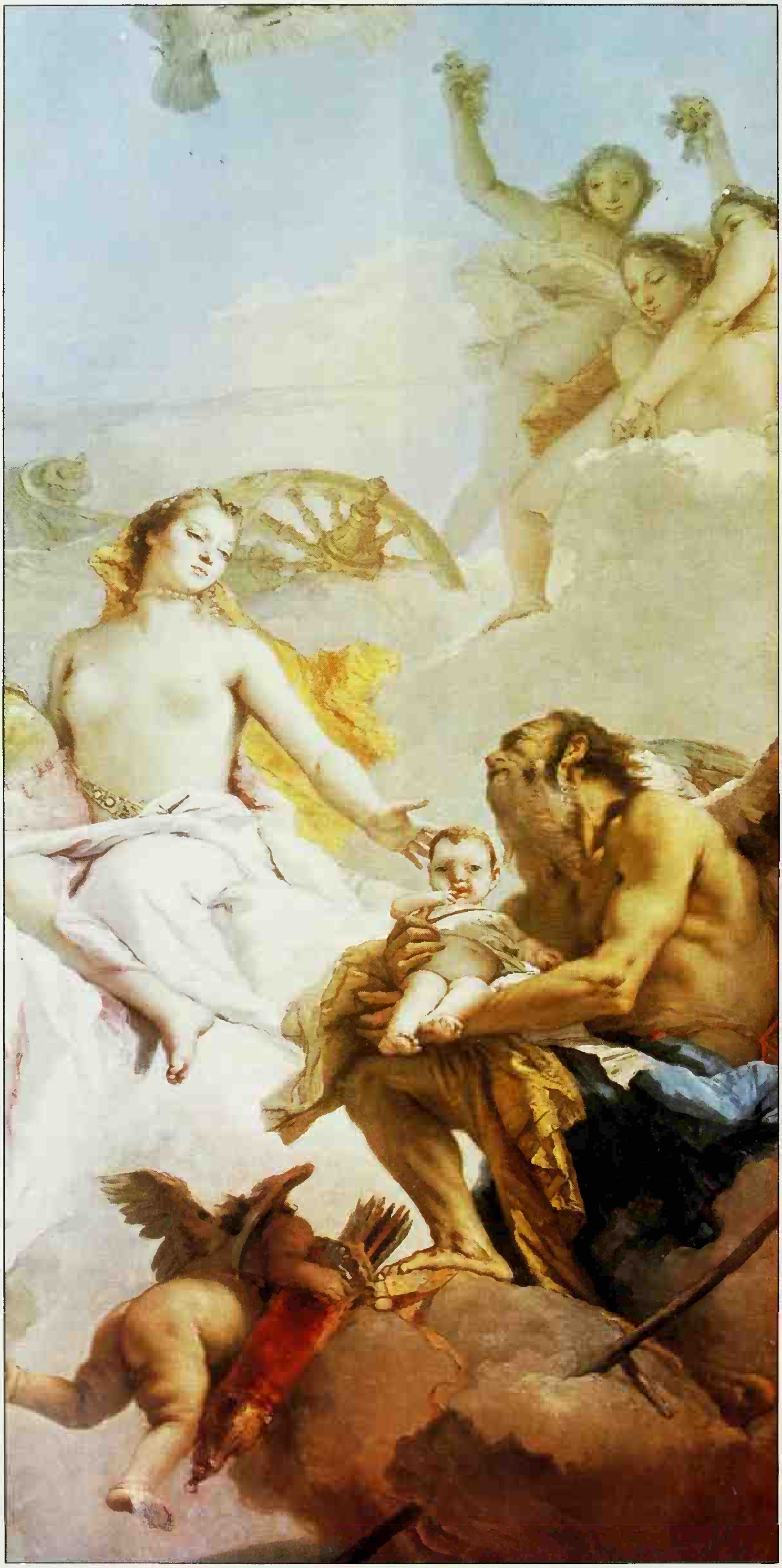
Hesiod's poem has a double theme, honesty and industry. The myth serves to show how human morality has declined from a perfect state, and also how it has become necessary to work for a living as the earth has withdrawn her bounty. In the time of the Golden Race, righteousness went together with leisure. The general conviction of mankind that the times are growing worse, that today's men are inferior to yesterday's, here finds systematic expression. The details of the idyll follow from a negation of all that is most bothersome at the present day: toil, pain, war, want, worry, old age. Even the residual guilt over animal sacrifice is purged away in the recollection of the time of innocence when men lived in amity with each other and their fellow creatures. The statement that Cronus was king may be connected with the fact that he presided over a summer festival at which conditions approached those enjoyed by the ideal race.

The Philosophers

Later Greek and Roman accounts all derive ultimately from Hesiod, but show a perspective that gradually changes with the times. Philosophers and moralists constructed their own accounts of the development of human society. Reflection, and observation of more backward peoples, brought a new awareness of the fact of technical progress. In 5th century BC accounts, the blessed vegetarians of the earliest age have been replaced by shivering cave-dwellers subsisting on acorns and whatever else they can find. So far from declining, on this view, man's state has constantly improved.

This has little in common with Hesiod's picture, and at first there was no attempt to reconcile the two. Plato more than once makes use of Hesiod's metal races, adapting them freely in myths of his own. In his Republic, he proposes justifying his strict class structure to the citizenry by persuading them that God has fashioned them with different metals in their constitutions, gold, silver, bronze or iron. Here the metals keep their qualitative significance, but there is no idea of temporal succession. Elsewhere, too, while he allows the idea of world cycles, Plato is disinclined to link virtue and happiness to them too firmly.

Later in the 4th century BC, the philosopher Dicaearchus gave a rationalistic interpretation of Hesiod's description of the life



of the Golden Race. Naturally their food grew of its own accord, because they had no agriculture, and that was why they were free from toil and care. They did not fall sick, because their diet was sparse and simple. There was no warfare, because there was nothing worth taking. So the myth is brought into harmony with more recent speculation about how early man's life must have been.

As yet there is no exaggerated insistence on the virtue and nobility of the primitive, no connection is seen between technical progress and moral regress. The influential Stoic writer Posidonius (135-50 BC), praising the benefits that philosophy had conferred on mankind, claimed that in the Golden Age the rulers were philosophers, who taught their subjects wisdom, restraint and justice, besides providing for their wants. It was the passing of power to tyrants that brought about the decline, and the need for laws. But the philosophers remained active as makers of these laws, and in developing the arts and crafts.

It is when we pass to Rome that we find the Golden Race turned into a Golden Age as a result of the ambivalence of the Latin word *saeculum*. Other new developments can also be explained from Roman conditions. The myth is given political applications.

In his famous fourth Eclogue (40 BC), Virgil announces that the wheel has come full circle, and that a return of the Golden Age is imminent. Within 20 years or so, he says, the earth will become generous again, fruit and crops will grow of their own accord, honey will run from the oaks, the snake will bite no more, warfare and commerce will disappear, the sheep will even grow coloured wool to save us dyeing it artificially. Obviously Virgil did not believe all this literally, and it is hard to say what he meant by it. But later, in the *Aeneid*, it becomes the reign of Augustus that he celebrates as the new Golden Age. His enthusiasm was sincere, but he was setting a bad precedent. To speak of 'this golden age' became a commonplace in the art of emperor-flattery.

Freedom of the Primitive

Virgil has a new concept of the connection between the end of the Golden Age and the growth of civilization. In the *Georgics*, he explains that Jupiter put a stop to the life of ease in order to stimulate mankind to resource and discovery, and 'so that his kingdom should not bask in torpor'. Deprived of automatic sustenance, they were forced to find out how to grow crops, strike fire from the flint, navigate, hunt, saw wood; harsh necessity was the mother of invention.

This favourable view of human progress

Allegory with Time, by the Venetian painter Tiepolo: the figure of Father Time goes back partly to the astrological image of Saturn as a grim old man, armed with a sickle and hourglass as symbols of the ending of human life, and partly to the image of Death as a skeleton, reaping men's lives with a scythe; the two images fused in Father Time

National Gallery

Living Backwards

Alice was just beginning to say 'There's a mistake somewhere –,' when the Queen began screaming, so loud that she had to leave the sentence unfinished. 'Oh, oh, oh!' shouted the Queen, shaking her hand about as if she wanted to shake it off. 'My finger's bleeding! Oh, oh, oh, oh!'

Her screams were so exactly like the whistle of a steam-engine, that Alice had to hold both her hands over her ears.

'What's the matter?' she said, as soon as there was a chance of making herself heard. 'Have you pricked your finger?'

'I haven't pricked it yet,' the Queen said, 'but I soon shall – oh, oh, oh!'

'When do you expect to do it?' Alice asked, feeling very much inclined to laugh.

'When I fasten my shawl again,' the poor Queen groaned out: 'the brooch will come undone directly. Oh, oh!' As she said the words the brooch flew open, and the Queen clutched wildly at it, and tried to clasp it again.

'Take care!' cried Alice. 'You're holding it all-crooked!' And she caught at the brooch; but it was too late: the pin had slipped, and the Queen had pricked her finger.

'That accounts for the bleeding, you see,' she said to Alice with a smile. 'Now you understand the way things happen here.'

'But why don't you scream now?' Alice asked, holding her hands ready to put over her ears again.

'Why, I've done all the screaming already,' said the Queen. 'What would be the good of having it all over again?'

Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass

was soon to be challenged. The complexity of life in the big city, and the diversity of luxury and ostentation that flourished there, increasingly provoked the censure of moralizers and satirists. Hence the advances of material civilization finally came to be identified as the symptoms and concomitants of moral degeneration. Seneca (60 AD) voiced the opinion that it was better to live in caves and hollow trees than in towering tenements that threaten to collapse, with locking doors that can only encourage avarice; the primitive's freedom was more valuable than our pastrycooks and ornamental ceilings. Man's essential needs can be easily satisfied in simple ways.

Thus mankind is made fully responsible for its own fall. It was not the gods' will or the exhaustion of Nature that put an end to the Golden Age, but man's folly.

M.L.WEST

The Fourth Dimension

THE PUBLICATION of Einstein's Theory of Relativity in the early years of the 20th century radically altered the way in which scientists regarded time. The experiments of Michelson and Morley had demonstrated that the speed of light remained constant, whether emitted by a body moving at speed (in which case, according to the mechanics of Isaac Newton, the speed of the body should be added to that of the light), or by a body at rest. Einstein's theory, which soon received practical proof, postulated that the speed of light was always constant.

An unexpected consequence of this argument was that elapsed time can no longer be taken as an absolute measurement: each observer of a physical event will have his own measure of time, and even identical clocks used by different observers will not necessarily agree.

Perhaps the best known part of Einstein's theory is the concept of the 'space-time continuum': a four-dimensional space made up of three linear dimensions and the 'fourth dimension' of time. Within this continuum, any three dimensions can be used to define the spatial position of a point – and a concomitant of this is that the remaining dimension, whichever it may be, can define the temporal position. In other words, there is no way, in mathematical calculations, in which the time dimension can be distinguished from the spatial dimensions.

In everyday life, we are very conscious of three-dimensional space: when we take a step forward, we can subsequently take a step back; the same is true for sideways movement, and for movement up and down. However far we move from a point, we can always return to it, in a spatial sense. Why should the same not be true of time, which, in theory, is indistinguishable from the other linear dimensions?

It was the distinguished logician Kurt Gödel who first showed, in 1949, that travelling backward in time was theoretically possible according to Einstein's equations. This presented him with a logical absurdity. As he put it:

> ...it enables one, e.g., to travel back into the near past of those places where he himself has lived. There he would find a person who would be himself at some earlier period of his life. Now he could do something to this person which, by his memory, he knows has not happened to him.

Modern physicists have seized on this absurdity as justification for their dismissal of time travel as impossible. They appeal to our common sense (not always a wise thing to do in the light of current developments in theoretical physics), and bolster their argument with recourse to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which can be briefly summarised as 'disorder always increases'. We have all seen, they say, a cup fall from the table and break in pieces on the floor; we have never seen the pieces rise from the floor and reassemble themselves on the table. The breaking cup results in a dissipation of energy, the energy that held the cup together up on the table, and a resultant decrease in order, from the ordered shape of the cup to a pile of disordered pieces. It is inconceivable, physicists maintain, that energy from an outside source, from the cosmos, should somehow be concentrated on the fragments to reform the cup and lift it back to the table.

Riding into the Future

I took the starting lever in one hand and the stopping one in the other, pressed the first, and almost immediately the second. I seemed to reel; I felt a nightmare sensation of falling; and, looking round, I saw the laboratory exactly as before. Had anything happened? For a moment I suspected that my intellect had tricked me. Then I noted the clock. A moment before, as it seemed, it had stood at a minute or so past ten; now it was nearly half-past three! I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever with both hands, and went off with a thud... The night came like the turning out of a lamp, and in another moment came tomorrow. H.G.Wells, *The Time Machine*

The Arrow of Time

From this argument has developed the concept of Time's Arrow, a concept that accords with our everyday experience that time appears to move inexorably in one direction, from the past to the future. Yet there are innumerable people who claim to be able to observe events in the past and the future. Are they deluded, do they physically transport themselves through time, or is it that they have observed an event at another point in time in the same way that they can observe one at another point in three-dimensional space?

Gödel devoted much thought to the possibility that the human awareness of the passage of time is an illusion. In 'A remark on the relationship between relativity theory and idealistic philosophy' (1959) he wrote:

> The existence of an objective lapse of time... means that reality consists of an infinity of layers of 'now' which come into existence successively. But, if simultaneity is something relative... [it] cannot be split up into such layers in an objectively determined way. Each observer has his own set of 'nows', and none of these various systems of layers can claim the prerogative of representing the objective lapse of time.

In a later conversation with the mathematician (and science fiction writer) Rudy Rucker, Gödel put this argument another way. 'The illusion of the passage of time', he said, 'arises from confusing the *given* with the *real*. Passage of time arises because we think of occupying different realities. In fact, we occupy only different givens. There is only one reality.'

From this it is possible to argue that the absurdity Gödel observed in 1949 can be resolved. The observer who travels back in time and sees himself at an earlier date is *only* an observer: his frame of reference in the space-time continuum is different from that of his earlier self, and the two cannot interact. He *cannot* 'do something to this person which, by his memory, he knows has not happened to him'.

Since the cosmos as we observe it contains all linear measurements as we know them, from the smallest to the largest – there is no measurement *outside* the infinite universe – it is arguable that all time is also contained within it. In other words, all time, past, present and future, exists simultaneously, and our everyday illusion of the passage of time in one direction is perhaps due to our everyday inability to make observations in this fourth dimension. Physicists who insist upon the inexorability of Time's Arrow are happy to accept the theory that a subatomic particle can exist in two places at the same time – could it not be that the particle is in one place, but at two simultaneous points in time? Extensions of this argument could go some way to account for the phenomenon of PK (see PSYCHOKINESIS).

Experiment with Time

The aeronautical engineer (designer of Britain's first military aircraft in 1906-7) and philosopher J.W.Dunne (1875-1949) devoted much of the latter part of his life to considering the problem of time. He began by examining the nature of prophetic dreams (see PROPHECY), and in his book *An Experiment with Time* (1927) he proposed an interesting theory.

Dunne suggested that each of us travels upon our own 'time-line' through the cosmos, rather like a passenger in a train running along a rail track. This explains our everyday awareness of the passage of time. At intervals these lines converge or intersect, when we experience an event simultaneously with another person. But, much as someone can put his head out of the train window and see something that has already passed, or something up the track ahead, we can (given the right conditions) experience not only an event that has already happened but an event that is yet to come. Moreover, in the same way that a passenger in one train can observe events taking place in another train running close by on a parallel track, it may be possible to observe events in the life of another whose time-line runs close to ours, but which – because their time-line is separate from ours – are occurring at a different time.

In subsequent books, notably *The Serial Universe* (1934), Dunne developed a theory that comes close to Gödel's concept of an infinity of layers of 'now'. Each layer of 'now' had to be observed by an observer, but this observer was himself part of another layer of 'now', and so, apparently, *ad infinitum*. Dunne did not put it in so many words, but it seems to be implied that the ultimate observer of all these layers, of reality, could be nobody else but God.

Hulton-Deutsch Collection

Engineer J.W.Dunne, whose analysis of prophetic dreams led to a theory of time

A Formula for Travel

What form could this projected time travel take? Let us consider the mathematics of wave mechanics in the three spatial dimensions. Seen in the context of Cartesian co-ordinates, multiplying a linear dimension by -1 will reverse its direction; multiplying it by the square root of -1 (*i*) will rotate it through 90 degrees, thus converting it to another dimension. Within the four-dimensional continuum, therefore, theoretically it should be possible to apply the same mathematics to the linear dimension of time. From the Greek *tropos*, meaning turn or movement, and the scientific symbol for time, *t*, De Canular has dubbed this theoretical possibility of travel through time '*ti-trope*'.

Ninian Bres *O Tempora*

Dunne's theories have been largely neglected by later philosophers, but an interesting point remains. In experiments with Zener cards (see EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION), the subject was required to forecast the order in which 25 cards were selected, but it was not customary, at the end of each experiment, to inform the subject what the actual order of cards was. At least one critic pointed out that this made it much harder for the subject to forecast the correct order, since it did not constitute an event on his time-line but only on that of the experimenter.

And, after all this, is physical time-travel a possibility or not? Can the time-traveller change trains? The American theoretical physicist John Wheeler was the first to show that certain solutions of Einstein's equations allowed for the existence of 'wormholes' which could connect distant parts of a single universe, or even what would otherwise be separate universes. In a development of this theory, a traveller who passed through a suitable wormhole could fetch up at the same place in his past or future.

The apparent drawback, if classical Newtonian, or even Einsteinian, mechanics apply, is that the wormhole (analogous to a 'black hole') would be pinched so tightly at its middle that the traveller would be crushed to death. However, three cosmologists – Michael Morris, Kip Thorne and Ulvi Yurtsever – have recently (1988) suggested that, if allowance is made for quantum theory, it is possible that this disaster could be averted. The possibility of such a wormhole was exploited by Carl Sagan in his science-fiction novel *Contact* (1986). But, so far, all is speculation.

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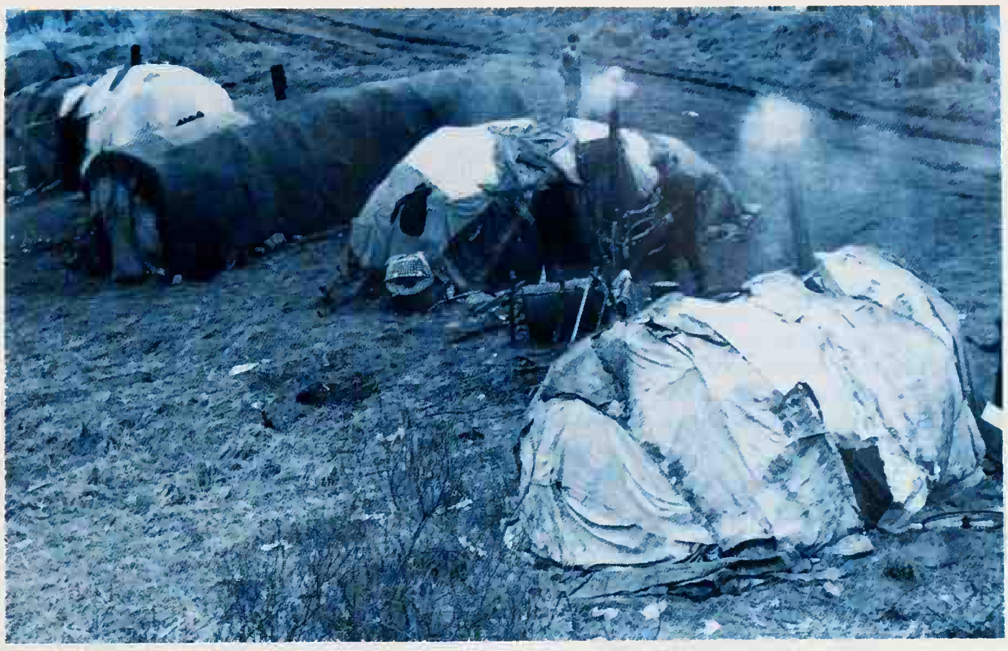
The tinkers who still travel the roads of Scotland and Ireland are probably the descendants of an ancient caste of itinerant metal-workers, whose skill once endowed them with great prestige

TINKERS

IN SCOTLAND and Ireland, as well as in parts of Scandinavia, there are still to be found nomadic or quasi-nomadic groups whose way of life resembles that of the gypsies, although they have little or no gypsy blood in them. It is impossible to speak with certainty of their origin, but it seems likely that they are the descendants of a very ancient caste of itinerant metal-workers whose status in tribal society was probably high. One of the trades associated with them from early times was that of tinsmith, and it is clear that to primitive man the ability to use metals seemed very close to magic; consequently, both 'black' and 'white' smiths for long enjoyed immense prestige, not only as craftsmen but as wielders of secret powers (see SMITH).

When the gypsies arrived in Western and Northern Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries (see GYPSIES), there was no doubt a certain amount of biological and socio-cultural mixing between them and the aboriginal itinerants whom they encountered (and in some areas appeared to have displaced). In certain regions a measure of fusion took place between the two groups, and a mixed 'tinkler-gypsy' race came into being, but at the present day the gypsies and tinkers view each other as quite distinct groupings; and there is not much love lost between them.

The ranks of the Scots tinkers were augmented at various periods as a result of events in the country's troubled history. Writing in the 1690s, Fletcher of Saltoun stated that as a result of repeated famine and breakdown in trade there were at least 200,000 people wandering homeless in Scotland, and reduced to begging for their bread. Many of these must have become absorbed in the tinker clans. Dynastic and religious wars, and the ultimate disaster of Culloden (1746) sent sizeable new contingents to join the fraternity, and some of the victims of the Highland clearances (mass evictions) no doubt added their quota. Tinkerdom, therefore, constitutes not so much an ethnic as a socio-cultural group; it has been described by F. Rehfisch, in an unpublished thesis, as 'cultural inasmuch as many of the cultural norms of the fraternity are different from those of the Flattie (the non-tinker), and social because most members interact with fellow tinkers and generally not with outsiders, if it can be avoided.'



Hamish Henderson

The tinkers' fear of persecution finds expression in their belief in 'burkers', body-snatchers supposed to lie in wait to murder them; especially suspect were medical students who seized bodies to sell to the anatomy departments of hospitals

Top right **A tinker's camp, north of Perth** ***Centre*** **Tinkers round a camp-fire** ***Right*** **A tinker family near Kintyre in Argyllshire**

Travellers From the Past

Some of the tinker groupings, both in Scotland and in Ireland, make up a kind of 'underground' clan system of their own, and individuals are intensely conscious of kinship and family ties. They want nothing to do with tramps and other solitaries, feeling themselves as distinct from this type of itinerant as they are from the Romany gypsies. A very intelligent tinker youth once put the distinction in a nutshell when, referring to an Irish tramp who used to wander around Scotland, he declared: 'That sort of lad just lives from day to day, but we (tinkers) live entirely in the past.' (It should be stressed at this point that the term 'tinker' itself is disliked by the fraternity because of its frequent use in a derogatory context; tinkers call themselves 'travellers'.)

There were, of course, many tinkers in the south as well as in the countries of the 'Celtic fringe', but in England the gypsies seem to have taken over their role in society and to a large extent put them out of business. It may safely be conjectured that the organized tinker groupings survived longer in Scotland and Ireland than in the south because a semi-tribal state of society lingered until a much later date in these countries.

Unlike the true gypsies, whose language is (or used to be) Romany, the tinkers use a cover-language known as 'cant'. The cant of the tinkler-gypsies of Galloway and south-east Scotland has quite a strong admixture of Romany in it, but north of the Forth-Clyde line the amount of recognizable Romany in the cover-tongue is hardly more than 15%. The tinkers of the North and West and of the Hebrides, whose native language is Gaelic (or was, until very recently) have a cover-tongue of their own which resembles one of the secret languages of Ireland. Their name for it is 'Beurlacheard', or 'lingo of the cairds' (the tinkers). That this is a very ancient cover-tongue is shown by the fact that some of the vocabulary which it reflects and deforms is archaic Gaelic.

The Black Coach

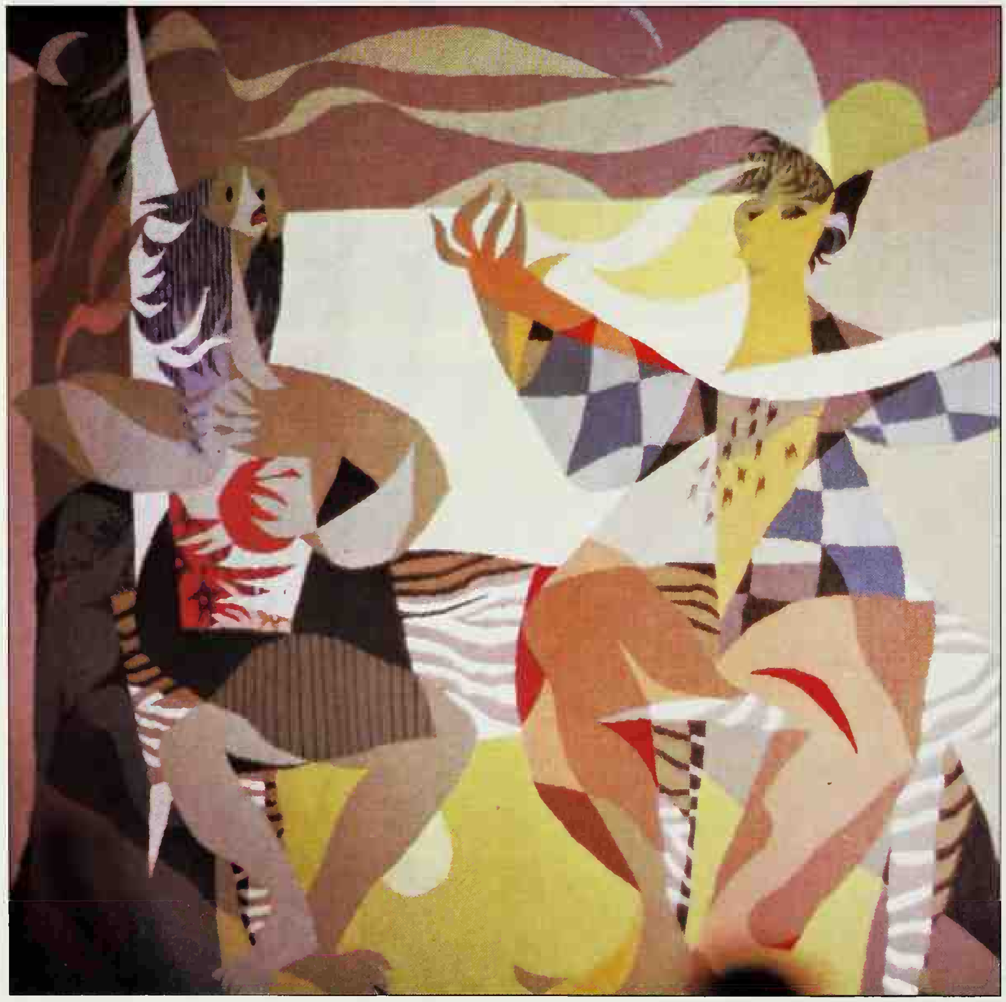
Although the 'flattie' (non-tinker) population for long feared that the tinkers were child-stealers (witness the lullaby 'Hush ye! Hush ye! Dinna fret ye! The black Tinkler winna get ye'), the folklore of the tinkers shows clearly and even poignantly that they lived in much greater fear of the ordinary population than the 'flatties' did of them. This persecution complex found, and still finds, expression in gruesome folklore about 'burkers' (body-snatchers) who were supposed to be continually on the wait to waylay and murder travelling folk, and sell their bodies to the anatomy schools. An Aberdeenshire tinker, quite well known as a country dance-band musician, told me in 1954: 'I mind, once upon a time, when ye couldna pass the Marischal College or the King's College, for the students would fairly tak a haud o' ye with a cleik (a hooked piece of iron) by the leg . . . they took ye right inside – they wanted fresh bodies.'

Writing four years later Rehfisch stated: 'To my surprise, I discovered that there is still a real belief in 'burkers', the villains of many of the most hair-raising tinker stories. We were told that the neighbourhood of the University of Aberdeen was a dangerous place to visit at night, and is so even today. One of our Blairgowrie informants claimed to have been chased by two or three red-robed students not more than five years ago. She said she knew their aim was to kill her and sell her body to the Anatomy Department . . . Another informant noticed a sign posted in the neighbourhood of that same university stating that it was dangerous for persons alone to frequent the area after dusk. Still another one said that the missing persons column in the Sunday newspaper *The News of the World* was concrete evidence that the body-snatchers were still active . . . She explained that in all probability those whose names appeared in that column were for the most part victims of these villainous burkers.'

Paraded by an accomplished storyteller at the camp-fire, the ghoulish trappings of the burker stories conjure up a phantasmagoric *grand guignol* world reminiscent of Dylan Thomas's 'The Doctor and the Devils'. Lum-hatted black-frockcoated noddies (medical students) drive the 'burker's coach' into the countryside to try and find isolated tinker encampments; the coach is long and black-draped, looking like a hearse; bloodhounds lope silently beside it; the horse's harness is swathed in cloth to prevent it chinking; the horse's hooves have rubber pads on them. In some of the stories the tinker victim gets his throat cut, and his relatives discover too late that he is missing; in others, there are hair's-breadth escapes from the villainous doctors and noddies. Looking at the faces round the camp-fire, I could well believe statements made to me that Perthshire tinkers would (until quite recently) leave their encampments and rush in panic to the hill on the appearance of a suspicious vehicle.

Although we can well believe that defenceless ragged nomads were occasionally the victims of murderous body-snatchers, we must probably look further back in history in order to understand the deeper-lying reasons for this persecution complex. In the 17th century it was a capital crime in Scotland merely to *be* an 'Egyptian' – Egyptian, for the courts, meaning not merely a gypsy, but any sort of wanderer, vagabond minstrel or travelling tinsmith of no fixed abode. If it could be proved that a travelling man of uncertain occupation was 'halden and repute to be an Egyptian', he was as good as dead. Among the victims of this law was the famous fiddler James MacPherson, who was hanged at Banff in 1700.

Like the gypsies, tinkers sometimes make money by telling fortunes. Quite a number are believed (by themselves and others) to possess the gift of 'second sight', but this gift is not at the beck and call of its possessor



In the north and west of Scotland the tinkers use a language that resembles one of the ancient and secret tongues of Ireland, which the tinkers call 'Beurlacheard' or 'lingo of the cairds': tapestry of Irish tinkers

William MacQuitty

and is never exploited commercially. The tinkers believe, as do many ordinary Scots country folk, that the seventh child of a seventh child is likely to possess this strange psychic gift.

The Uncanny MacPhees

Belief in the existence of fairies is still very widespread among the tinkers. In *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales*, Dr. K. M. Briggs prints several allegedly true stories about fairies recorded by the School of Scottish Studies from tinker informants. These include stories about brownies, elves, changelings, water-kelpies, fairy funerals, fairy music heard by mortals, and – last but not least – 'a wee green man' seen in the Sma' Glen. Rehfisch reports (in 1958): 'Some of our informants had seen one or more fairies, with never any harm to themselves. One had found a fairy's coffin with a little corpse inside! They kept it for some time until one day it mysteriously disappeared. Ghosts are feared, though there are but few tales of them harming living persons. The number of our informants who claim to have actually seen one or more of them is legion.' Belief in witches and the black art is also common.

Finally, one rather curious item of tinker folklore deserves mention. A sort of mystical aura surrounds the name of the MacPhees, one of the Scots tinker clans. The MacPhees are regarded by some as the 'original' tinkers, the 'first on the road', but even so an undoubted 'hoodoo' seems to lie over their very name: it is bad luck to hear or speak the name MacPhee, and a substitute name such as MacFud, MacaFud or Maca-Tuttie, is supposed to be used in place of it. If the first person one sees when leaving for work in the morning is a MacPhee, it is advisable to turn back; no good will come of the day's endeavours. Some tinkers believe that to say the words 'cold iron' constitutes an effective counter-spell.

HAMISH HENDERSON

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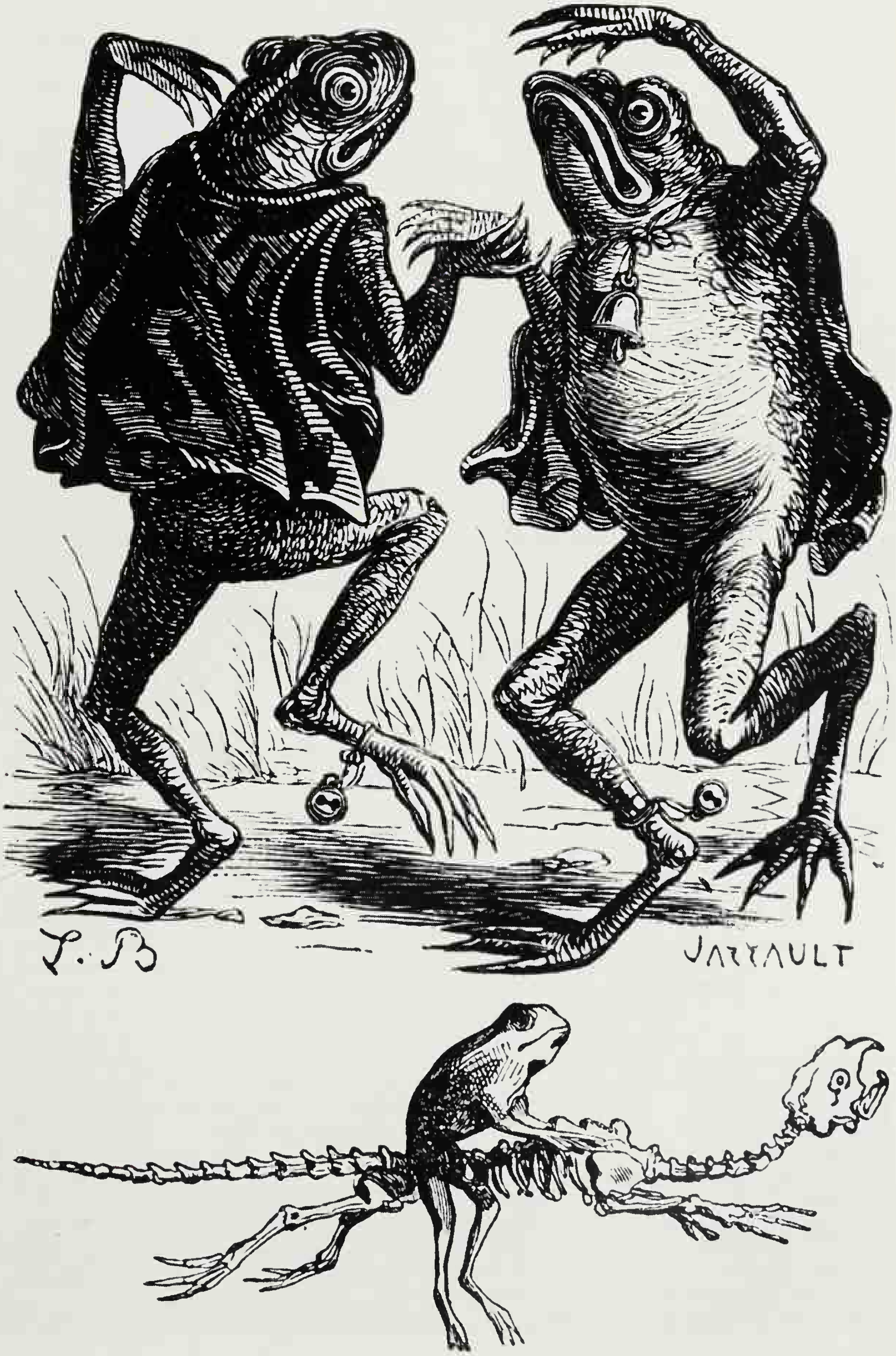
The grotesque physical appearance of the toad does nothing to endear it to humans: indeed in England a toad might be a witch's familiar and in Europe it could be the witch herself

TOAD

THE IMPORTANCE of the toad in world folklore seems to derive more from its basic characteristics than from any diffusion of notions about it from one area to another. Being associated with water, toads and frogs are involved in rain-making and other fertility rites. Moreover, the fact that toads resemble grotesque, miniature human beings arouses the ambivalent feelings so often inspired by mysterious and possibly sinister creatures. Not only are the faces of toads reminiscent of a very wide-mouthed human face but their attitudes while swimming and copulating bear some resemblance to human postures and human movements.

The toad is rightly regarded as venomous. If irritated, toads exude a substance, from glands on the skin, which carries two separate poisons sufficiently violent to cause dogs to foam at the mouth and become feverish. During the Middle Ages, bandits sometimes forced a toad into the mouth of one of their victims. Thus there are adequate grounds for regarding toads with repugnance.

In England, particularly in East Anglia, the toad had an evil reputation. A toad might be a witch's familiar and she was said to make a magic lotion of toad spittle and the sap of the sow-thistle. With this concoction, she outlined a crooked cross on her body, and so could make herself invisible. In parts of central Europe, toads were believed to be witches and in many areas their evil repute was such that they were killed, but in Rumania a toad killer was believed capable of murdering his mother and therefore they remained unmolested.



Toads have an evil reputation in many parts of Europe, and were often believed to be in league with the Devil or to be witches' familiars *Above* Toads dancing at a sabbath and *(below)* a toad flying to a sabbath, from De Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal*

In Cambridgeshire certain men, called toadmen, were believed to have special power over horses, and to be able to make them stand still despite all efforts to get them to move. They could also render horses uncontrollable. Such a person might be regarded as in league with the Devil and viewed with some anxiety. A man wishing to acquire this power had to skin a toad, or peg it to an ant-hill until its bones were picked clean. He then carried the bones in his pocket until they were dry, and at midnight, when there was a full moon, he floated the bones on a stream. They would screech and one bone would set off upstream. If he secured this bone, he gained the powers of a toadman. Such men were said to be found in Cambridgeshire up to 1938. It is difficult to decide the extent to which this ritual was actually carried out or taken seriously.

Also in Cambridgeshire, toads were regarded as predicting storms. It was believed that they could hear distant thunder, inaudible to human ears, and could then be seen making their way to water. The origin of this belief may be that toads move from their winter quarters to their breeding place with remarkable unanimity within a period of a few days, and thunderstorms may occur around this time.

Toads, or parts of them, were considered efficacious as charms. A Herefordshire man declared that he could steal as much as he liked, and would never be found out, because he wore a toad's heart around his neck. In Devonshire, toads were burnt because they were believed to be in league with the Devil. Perhaps on the principle 'Set a thief to catch a thief', the toad was reputed to be able to drive away noxious things. In a book on gardening which appeared in 1593, Thomas Hyll recommended that before sowing seeds a toad should be drawn around the garden, then placed in an earthenware pot and buried in the centre of a flower bed. He advised that after the seeds had been sown the toad should be dug up, otherwise the vegetables growing round about would acquire a bitter taste. Having taken these precautions, the gardener could feel confident that no creeping thing would injure his crops. This appears to be a version of an ancient belief: the Greek writer Apuleius and the Roman writer Pliny advocated placing a toad in an earthenware pot in a field to avert storms, and two years after Hyll's book appeared another writer repeated this timeworn recipe for protecting the fields.

There was said to be enmity between toads and spiders. Toads do indeed eat spiders, and possibly by an extension of this observed fact the creatures were credited with being able to repel evil.

Jewelled Head

A toadstone (in practice, any stone that resembled the toad or frog in shape or colour) was believed to have the power of curing bites and stings, when applied to the affected part. You could always tell whether such a stone was genuine by holding it in front of a toad; if the toad jumped forward to snatch it from you the stone was no counterfeit.

During the Middle Ages and later, it was believed that the toad concealed a precious jewel in its head. In Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the Duke remarks:

> Sweet are the uses of adversity;
> Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

Earlier writers also refer to this belief. One, in 1569, commented: 'There is to be found in the heads of old and great toads a stone they call borax or stelon, which being used in a ring gives a forewarning against venom.' The fear of assassination by poison was very real among the upper classes in some countries during the medieval period and the Renaissance. Lyly, the Elizabethan playwright, wrote in *Euphues*: 'The fayrer the stone is in the toades head the more pestilent the poyson is in hir bowelles.' Thus association proceeded from the fact that the toad produces a poisonous secretion to the supposition that it carries within itself an antidote.

The belief in the toadstone's efficacy against poison dates from at least as far back as the 12th century. But the poisonous characteristics of the toad were recognized much earlier. Pliny said that the creature was full of poison and Aelian (3rd century AD) added his own touch of exaggeration, remarking that people had been killed instantly by drinking wine to which the blood of a toad had been added. Milton, influenced by his classical learning, relates in *Paradise Lost* that Satan transformed himself into a toad in order to squat by Eve's ear and inject poison into her blood.

Demon Puppets

There are some magicians who feed puppets, little demons in the form of toads, on a brew of milk and flour, giving them the first morsel to taste. These magicians dare not leave their homes without first asking permission of the puppets and telling them how long they are going to be away, whether it is three or four days. If the puppets reply that it is too long, then they dare not undertake the journey or in fact do anything to upset the puppets . . . Gentil or Gentien le Clerc reported that he (Nevillon) could get more out of his puppet than out of God. He said that he had often seen Nevillon's puppet which looked like a big black toad covered with black fur. It was kept in a box beneath a tile on the floor, which jumped and lifted when the toad wished to be fed. He said that he had seen it again six weeks later in Nevillon's bedroom and on another occasion he saw Nevillon carrying it under his coat. Nevillon told him a dozen times that he would get one for him, if he liked, and that there was more to be gained from the puppet than from God. He said that he would get nothing from God, whereas his puppet would always bring him something.

Pierre de Lancre
L'Incrédulité et Mécréance du Sortilège

Despite the toad's bad reputation in magic and folklore, the Toad in Kenneth Grahame's book *The Wind in the Willows* is a foolish and boastful but essentially amiable creature: illustration to the book by Arthur Rackham

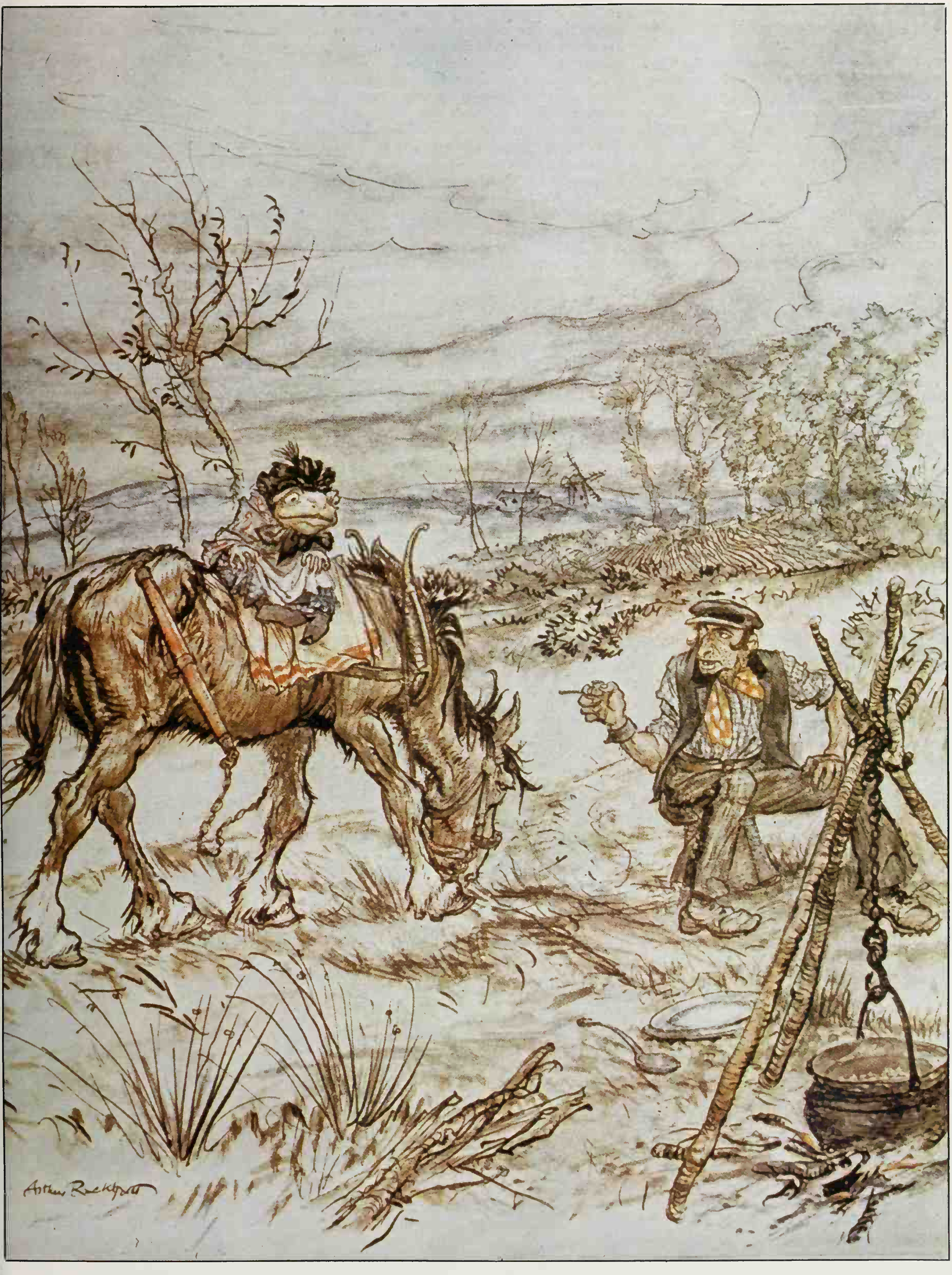
Probably because the toad and the fabulous basilisk were both reputed to be venomous, they were brought into association during the Middle Ages. The basilisk was said to kill shrubs by touching them and smash stones by breathing on them. Writers of the 12th and 13th centuries stated that it was born from an egg laid by a cock in old age and hatched by a serpent or toad.

In general, and especially in ecclesiastical circles, the toad was regarded during the medieval period as a revolting, Satanic creature. A story was told of a monk who, during Lent, caught a cock in order to cook and eat it. When he put in his hand to extract the entrails he pulled out a toad. Another tale relates that as an extremely avaricious money-lender lay dying he begged his wife to place a purse full of money in his tomb. This she did, as stealthily as possible, but the secret leaked out. Searching for the money, some people went to the grave and opened it. They saw there two toads, one in the opening of the purse and the other on the man's breast. 'One with its mouth was extracting coins from the purse, the other taking those that had been extracted and putting them into his heart. It was as if they said: "We will satisfy that insatiable heart with money."' Those who concocted such stories were not interested in natural history but in edification, so they associated a revolting creature with self-indulgence and greed. A sculpture at Strasbourg entitled *The Seducer of Unfaithful Virgins* depicts snakes and toads climbing up a handsome youth's back while he holds forth an apple.

The fact that one of the Zoroastrian sacred books states that toads are evil creatures and should be killed, shows that the dislike of toads is not confined to Christendom and confirms that their appearance and characteristics awaken a deep-seated and widespread repugnance.

Such feelings may account for the toad being among the animals which in various parts of the world are treated as scapegoats. In Togoland the Hos enacted an elaborate ceremony annually to expel noxious things and influences from their midst. After they had besought evil spirits and witches to enter into bundles of creepers, which they carried out of town, they swept their houses and yards, and washed their faces with magical medicine. At night, a toad, tied to a palm leaf, was drawn through the streets. Among the shamanistic Gilyaks of Northern Asia the toad also figured as a scapegoat. After bears had been ritually sacrificed, the figure of a toad, made of birch bark, was placed peering in through a window while inside the house a dummy bear, dressed in Gilyak costume, occupied a bench of honour. The guilt of slaying the bear was laid upon the toad.

E. A. ARMSTRONG


Arthur Rackham

Mary Evans Picture Library

TOBACCO

WHEN white explorers reached the New World, tobacco was grown abundantly in the West Indies, Latin America and much of what is now the United States. It was cultivated by many agricultural Indian tribes and also by some who were not agriculturalists. Most western and south-eastern Indians gathered wild tobacco, if they did not grow their own. Other tribes, who could neither grow it nor find it, acquired it by trade or theft. Certainly they almost all smoked it. They stuffed the dried and crumbled leaves into hollow reeds, like primitive cigarettes, or rolled the leaves themselves into cylinders like cigars, or packed their tobacco in superbly crafted, decorated and far from primitive pipes.

Smoke of all kinds – from burnt offerings or incense, for example – has always been used as a carrier of man's prayers and praises upwards to the gods, and American Indians used tobacco smoke for this purpose. At the beginning of any holy or otherwise important enterprise, honour would be paid to the gods and their blessings sought by four (or six) puffs of smoke from a ceremonial pipe, passed among the chiefs and warriors: four puffs to each of the sacred four directions (and often two more to the other two directions, upwards and downwards). The Incas and other South American peoples used this ritual; it is thought that the early Mound Builders, prehistoric inhabitants of the eastern woodlands of North America, did too, for they had numerous and sophisticated pipes.

When the Plains Indians performed this tobacco ritual, using their glorious calumet (reed-stemmed) pipes, the paramount chief smoked first, facing east, and the pipe passed to the right, sunwise. But there were variations: a smoker might dance briefly with the pipe, or the pipe stem itself might be presented to the four corners (giving the spirits a puff) instead of the smoke. The Pawnee used enormous calumet pipes, with stems four feet long, and bowls that rested on the ground, too large to pass from hand to hand.

But if outward forms differed, the ceremonial purpose remained the same. The act of smoking together bound the smokers in a pact or covenant, and called down the sanction of the spirits on their intentions. Western films have provided a typically over-simplified idea of 'the peace-pipe', but certainly such ritual smoking together did take place when warring tribes drew up treaties.

Smoke Offering to the Gods

Smoking to the four directions was by no means the only occasion at which tobacco was used in Indian ceremonial. Most south-eastern tribes offered tobacco smoke to gods and spirits whenever the occasion demanded – even smoking to the spirits of trees before cutting them down. They also put tobacco in the graves, along with other gifts, to ensure the dead person's well-being in the next world.

The Iroquois and other north-eastern tribes made their smoke offerings by placing tobacco directly onto a fire during dances and ceremonies. The hunters of the Labrador region of Canada might blow smoke onto some talismanic object that bore their personal good luck; similarly, a Plains warrior might offer pipe smoke to the magical objects within his medicine bundle.

Tobacco smoke is sometimes part of a purifying ritual that precedes most Pueblo ceremonies. Under the supervision of a special Tobacco clan, smoke from reed cigarettes or special clay pipes will be blown over altars, magical objects and prayer-sticks. And the meeting of the Pueblo men to discuss and plan a major ceremony becomes itself a ritual occasion on which tobacco is formally and communally smoked.

Sovereign Remedy

King James I's *Counterblaste to Tobacco*:
Tobacco was widely thought to possess rare medicinal power and to be a cure for all and sundry disorders; and the bulk of the *Counterblaste* is a scathing attack upon these claims. The King's notions of medicine and anatomy are, of course, absurd . . . Yet he is on solid ground in challenging the therapeutic powers claimed for tobacco. Smoke flies up into the head, he scoffs, yet is supposed to cure gout in the lower limbs. It is a remedy for diseases directly opposed to each other. It makes a drunken man sober and a sober man drunk, it induces sleep yet quickens and awakens the brain.

D. H. Willson *King James VI and I*

Tobacco can function as more than an offering to the spirits. The Crow Indians consider it to be an object of religious veneration in its own right. Their myths say that a high spirit called a Star Being came to earth in the form of tobacco, but was recognized by a culture hero who declared the plant and its cultivation to be sacred. (Many other tribes have comparable legends of tobacco as a gift from the gods.) The Crow developed a Tobacco Society that devoted itself to the ceremonial planting, harvesting and curing of tobacco as a major part of the year's religious observances. The Omaha Indians had a different cult, centred on sacred pipes. Two special pipes served as the tribe's main totem objects, brought out and smoked by the great chiefs before any major event.

Healing Powers

In general the tobacco used by Indians of North America was a rough variety, strong enough to make men dizzy and mildly 'high', and some used it to induce visions. The Indians also used tobacco in healing. They believed that the smoke was good for asthma and lung complaints, but they especially found the leaves useful in poultices for sores and wounds.

Folk medicine (mainly American) also uses tobacco in more overtly magical cures, often linked with the traditional healing powers of human breath and spittle. Blowing smoke into the ear cures ear-ache; blowing smoke onto a baby's stomach cures its colic; spitting tobacco juice onto warts causes them to disappear. Chewing tobacco is also believed to forestall pain while treating snakebite, and anglers can spit tobacco juice onto their bait, for extra luck. The raw tobacco leaf serves in a cure for indigestion, by crossing two leaves on the sufferer's stomach; and to keep the household from disease all winter, hang a tobacco leaf in the chimney all summer.

Today with all the medical warnings surrounding the habit, smokers know that smoking is itself unlucky. On a slightly happier note, it is said that if your cigarette keeps going out, it is a sure sign that you are in love.

Tongs

American term for Chinese secret societies, frequently combining religious and political aims with racketeering; in the 1850s the Tongs fought gang wars in the United States, wearing warpaint and armed with hatchets: these societies originated in China, among rebels against the established government and the state religion.
See CHINA.

Torah

Hebrew for 'teaching', applied in the first instance to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, traditionally believed to have been dictated to Moses by God, and by extension to the other books of the Old Testament; there is also the oral Torah, the teachings held to have been conveyed by God to Moses by word of mouth, together with the commentaries of the rabbis during the first five centuries AD.
See JUDAISM.

'For those who live within a totemic culture, it is the very basis of their understanding of the world'; a totem is a hereditary badge or emblem of a tribe or other group, usually representing an animal after which the group is named; the word is also applied to the animal itself

TOTEM

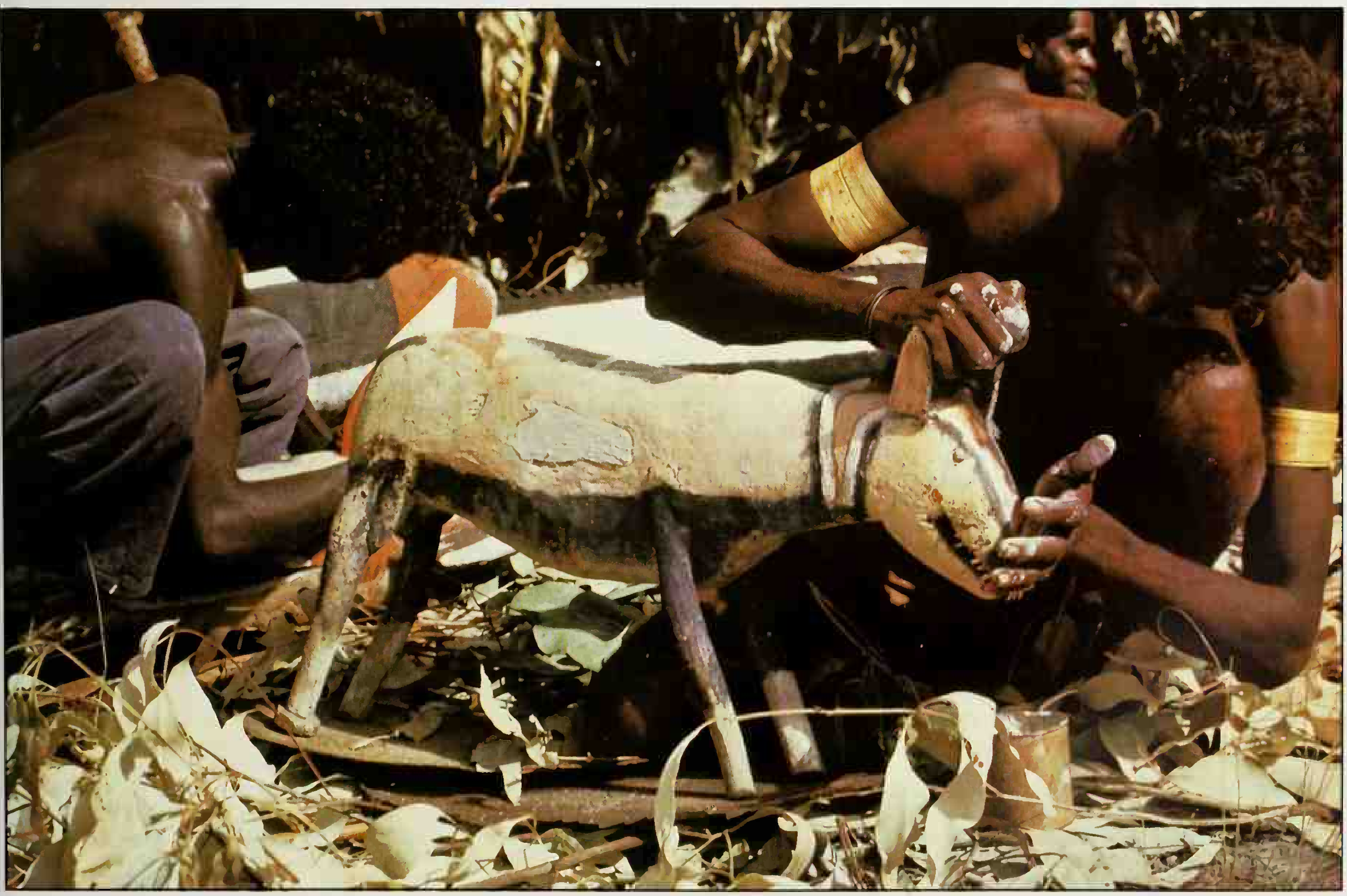
THE WORD TOTEM comes from the North American Indians, who did not so much believe in descent from animals as that their early ancestors were partially divine and could change their shape from time to time to suit their convenience. Echoes of this belief remain in some of the Greek myths, quite as much as among Indian tribes, such as the Haida of Queen Charlotte's Islands, British Columbia, who have left remarkably beautiful carvings illustrating their mythology. The development of totemic animal myths into romantic epics, symbolized in the carved house poles and decorated costumes of the tribal leaders, is not unlike the system in the early Middle Ages when mythology first developed into the rich artistic heritage of heraldry. A Haida chief who belonged to the bear clan and wore symbols of Bear Mother on his clothing was not so very different from the ancient Earls of Warwick who, from a family tradition, adopted a bear with a ragged staff as their badge.

On the great plains of North America, the tribes of the prairie were also interested in animals which symbolized the spirit world. Young men would hope for revelation of an individual totem creature. On reaching puberty they would go through a short period of instruction from the elders and magicians of the tribe, and were then sent out on a difficult journey to find their protective spirit. The young man would walk away from the village into the open prairie: he would carry neither clothes nor blanket, but he was allowed a bow and arrows. He was expected to abstain from all food for the four days of his journey and as he went through the days and nights he asked the Power Above and Earth Mother to grant him protection and to give him a spirit helper who would stand beside him through life, warn him of danger and lead him into paths which would be honourable and profitable. In a state of semi-starvation, combined with near ecstasy in his prayerful relation with the spirit world, he would naturally experience many visions, like waking dreams. At some point he would see an animal which might possibly talk to him, but in any case he would become aware that this was the creature which was meant to be his totem. He was expected to shoot it, kill it and skin it. Then he would keep some special portion: claws, or skull, or some of the bones which would go inside the dried skin. This was what Europeans would call his 'medicine bag'. He would carry it with him tucked in his belt: it would be his protector in battle and his guide in times of peace. This was the traditional totem.

The Continuity of Life

There are examples of this type of attitude throughout humanity. One may think of the young squire kneeling in prayer all night, asking for the blessings of heaven and for the care of a patron saint in the days to come when he would be a knight and become a leader in peace and in war. Among the peoples of ancient America, symbolic animals and birds were regarded as sent from the spirit world. Among the Inca, the respect paid to the condor and the puma was characteristic of this belief, and even in ancient Britain, the blackbird was a messenger of the dead and the magpie a kind of fairy bird. However, the basic feeling for totemism rarely reaches the development that it had among the North American Indians, and also among the far more primitive Australian aborigines.

The aboriginal tribespeople of Australia lived a reasonably comfortable life with early Stone Age equipment. The primary skills of hunting animals, finding edible roots and supplies of water allowed them to live well in regions of the Australian desert which are quite uninhabitable to Europeans. The philosophical elders among the aborigines considered that in the long ago, in the Dreamtime (see AUSTRALIA), the world was not so well organized as



Australian aborigines held totemic dances in which the men dressed to resemble their totemic ancestors and believed that they entered the Dreamtime and became their ancestors: carvings of a totemic dingo and whale

E. L. Cranstone Axel Poignant

Above Australian aborigines believed that spirits waited for rebirth in churingas, sacred slabs of stone or wood, carved with patterns representing the emergence of the totem ancestor in the ancient Dreamtime ***Right*** Totemic figures from British Columbia: an American Indian totem might be a man's individual guardian spirit or the spiritual protector of an entire group; it would usually show itself in the form of an animal or bird

today. Land and water were not properly separated, there were trees and grasses that were living beings which could move about, man and animals were somehow all one, so that the beings which finally developed as men had quite probably inhabited animal forms previously. Within any given tribe there were several divisions; each was named after an animal or other creature from the Dreamtime, who had developed his human side and so become a direct ancestor of that part of the tribe. It was very important for people to know about their totem ancestor. They not only held ceremonies in his honour, but also it was well known that people of one totem might only marry people of a specified other totem; it was a way of making sure that intermarriage was not too close between related groups.

The aborigines did not believe that death was the end. The body was often thrown away to decay, except perhaps for a few bones that were removed for magical use, for the body was but a temporary house for the reality of the living being. Aborigines believed that after the body died, the personality escaped, sometimes into sacred trees, sometimes to hide in caves. Among the aborigines of central Australia, the spirits went back into sacred slabs of stone or wood which had been carved with patterns representing the emergence of the totem ancestor in the ancient Dreamtime. The soul would rest in one of these *churinga*, as they were called, and wait until a likely mother passed by.

This magic was known to the elders of each tribe and was not shared by women. All the women were allowed to know was that somewhere in a sacred area which they were not allowed to visit there were the souls of ancestors waiting to enter their bodies and be born as new babies. Since in the wandering, hunting life of the aboriginals it was difficult to look after many children, women were usually careful to keep away from these magical places. It appears that they knew that babies could not be born without the help of man, and also that intercourse would not necessarily result in the birth of a child; pregnancy would occur only when the spirit had entered them and so given life which could properly develop into a baby. When a child was born, the elders of the tribe consulted together and decided whose spirit was in the child. They then removed the appropriate sacred churinga from its store, and it was kept in another place for the whole lifetime of the newly born person. At death the soul was thought to have re-entered the churinga and it was then placed with the remainder, where souls were waiting rebirth into the pleasant world.

The belief that people belonged to certain selected groups of totem ancestors, related to the non-human world, led to many interesting ceremonies. These were conducted by the men, mostly in places which women would not visit. Women took part only in the social *corroboree*, an occasion for singing and dancing, in which very often the men might wear the secret painted decoration of the totem ancestors. The women, of course, did not know the meaning of the designs. They had dances of their own, and when the men were putting on their little theatrical ballet about the ancestors, the women could join in the rhythm and beat out the time on pieces of wood or bundles of kangaroo skin on their laps.

But at the really important occasions where the history of the totem ancestor was mimed, no women were allowed. The men painted themselves with red and yellow ochre and white pipe-clay. They decorated themselves with white tufts of down from the feathers of the larger birds which they stuck to themselves by making little cuts in their skin so that the blood would act as glue. From their hair, they often built up elaborate head-dresses of sticks and grass, all painted with ochre which made them in some way resemble their own ancestral totem, such as the emu or the kangaroo. Then, to the accompaniment of explanatory chants by their elders, they would dance around sacred objects which represented the places where the ancestors had emerged from the earth and they would pretend to be once again in the Dreamtime where man and animal were indistinguishable.

In imitating the animal, one could see through the disguise to the shape of a man who was going to develop into the totemic ancestor. Among the Australian aborigines this was not just a representation, it was so important a ritual that the people taking part really believed that they had entered another time and were at one with their ancestors. In fact, it was perfectly clear to them that since their spirits had come from sacred churinga they had formerly inhabited a human body. Before that, the soul had been in the churinga; and so on through time, from man to storage stone and back, and back into the Dreamtime itself. They believed that they were the same people who had been the ancestors, though they were now living in a modern body in a modern time. So to the Australian aborigines, the totem belief was a belief in the continuity of human life from the very beginning of things when man and animal were all one.

In a way, this is reminiscent of the scientific teaching about the evolution of man through the humanoids from a physical animal ancestry, but of course the aborigine was not interested in studying the origin of species. He just believed that the chants and the words handed down to him from the elders in the past were the sacred truth about the nature of humanity and the relationships between man and the totem.

The totemic idea is very widespread, but in many cases it amounts to little more than

Picturepoint, London

poetic simile. People of certain occupations were supposed to be like the animals which were symbolic of their activities, so that they were distinguished by the names of animals and birds, more or less as one might give someone an appropriate nickname. In Aztec Mexico there were two groups of military orders, one of which was named for the wild cat, the ocelot. These were the people who were sent out as scouts to hide among the rocks and find out about the disposition of the enemy and, when possible, to leap upon one and seize him, making him prisoner for sacrifice, just as the wild cat among the rocks of the mountains might leap upon an unsuspecting traveller. The other warriors, who led frontal attacks on the enemy, were dedicated to the eagle; they were thought of as the people who descended from above upon the foe and seized him in their talons, and so wrapped him up to be taken as an offering to the gods. These were poetic images as well as the badges of the particular clans of warriors.

Sometimes, however, certain creatures have been regarded as sacred. In many tribes where an animal totem was respected, this totem was never eaten by members of its related social group, for this was considered insulting to a relative.

This idea of relationship between man and animal occurs occasionally in everyday life, when we compare each other to some creature which exhibits the characteristic we are talking about. To say that a person is a cat is something of an insult, but it does imply a quality of personality. To say that a person is hawk-eyed implies that he possesses the keen vision of the bird. Such habits of speech help us to understand totemism as something perfectly natural. The idea has so many different origins that it is quite wrong to think that it is the same thing in every part of the world. The relationship is in a certain community of ideas and not of direct meaning. It is best to use the word to relate to those groups of people who believe in their descent from an animal ancestor; and this is much more true of the Australian aborigines than of the North American Indians.

As has already been noted, the word totem had a North American Indian origin, derived from a Chippewa dialect of the Algonquian group of languages. The word was originally *ototeman*, which refers to a close relation like a brother or sister. A boy obtained a personal spirit protector through his visions during the lonely vigil of his days of initiation, but he also had a group totem, a symbolic being who protected all members of his social group. This group totem was usually in the form of an animal or bird, though representing a kind of hidden power. It was symbolic of the *orenda* or inner power which inspired the community.

Although the American Indian totem was not directly ancestral, as among the Australian aboriginals, it was also an expression of the human relationship with the powers of Nature. The spiritual quality of orenda was something which men shared with all other creatures and objects in Nature. To the American Indian all Nature was instinct with life and capable of being brought into relationship with mankind. One called, or asked the wise man to call, in a specially receptive state of mind, and the answer would come. The 'medicine bag' would be handled or even displayed on such occasions, because it represented the first firm contact with the world in which one's personal totem was at home. Rapport with the hidden powers was important since they were man's supporters in the quest of life.

Although the American Indian was no longer as totally dependent upon the gifts of uncultivated Nature as the aborigine, he relied on many more spirit powers for help. There were the animal spirits who would affect his success in hunting by their willingness or unwillingness to yield their bodies to feed humans. There were the spirits of maize, tobacco, beans and pumpkins, who must be asked to give their fruit abundantly, as well as to produce living seed for future sustenance. All these were influenced by this gentle mystery of the totem who was the protector of the individual and his community. Maybe this was a projection of the 'unconscious', but to the Indian this was no matter for introspection. The powers were felt to be external, and the totem spirit was an external protector.

The transition from the diffuse feeling of a spirit being, as expressed in North American totemism, to organized religious systems with hierarchies of defined divinities is a natural one. It can be seen in the ceremonies of such highly cultured societies as those of the Pueblo Indians, whose *kachina* spirits partake of both the generalized vagueness of the totem and the clear-cut line of action expressed in a formalized mythology characteristic of incipient gods (see PUEBLO INDIANS). Though one must remember that to all known American Indian societies there was an awareness of a being which Europeans have called the Great Spirit, but which may best be described in the Iroquois term *Wa'nkonda*, the 'Power Above'.

The Watchful Ancestors

A kind of totemism has existed in almost every branch of the human race. In the late Paleolithic in Europe, the engravings and paintings suggest that there was some magical connection between the painting on the wall of a deep cave and the bringing of animals to be hunted in the outer world (see CAVE ART). Numerous implements, such as spear throwers, have engravings of animals on them: one is led to imagine that they represent either good-luck charms or are the owner's marks, symbolic of the owner's name. However, we have no real factual information about the mental processes of our remote ancestors, only the knowledge that they must have had much experience in common with other peoples at the same stage of cultural development. Is the reindeer carved on a bone staff the totem of a hunter, or a sign to help the staff throw a dart at a reindeer? We do not know.

The idea of the relation of man to Nature was important in Polynesia, but it can hardly be said to be expressed in any recognizably totemic form. In the background of Polynesian religion was the idea

Detail of a totemic carving of 'double-headed nake', executed in 1958 by Chief Mungo Master of the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia: the word totem itself comes from he North American Indians but the idea of a lose relationship between the human and the nimal is known all over the world

hat the Creator had brought forth the first ncestor of all classes of being; that the oceans, islands, birds, plants and fishes were as much the children of the Creator as he tribes of men. The relationship was expressed in sexual life. Everywhere the descent of man from the gods was a family matter, and was expressed by reduplicating he race generation after generation. Similarly, the other creatures descended as great families, all eventually linked in a common ancestry to the Supreme Being.

Melanesian societies often have a more clearly distinguishable totemic belief. For nstance, for the village agriculturists of New Ireland their ancestors have become watchful spirits who look after the welfare of their descendants and protect them from vil forces. Wood sculpture, brightly painted, epresents the more important citizens at heir funeral ceremonies. The protective departed is usually shown as a bird holding a fish, and clutching a serpent in its talons.

In Africa there are remnants of totemism n the spirits worshipped in animal form, ike the Old Man Mantis who was an mportant divine being to one group of Bushmen. Similar fragmentary survivals of he totemic idea can be found among many peoples, but the usual type of belief which looks like totemism is more of a comparative nature. People are named after animals, both factually and jokingly, but they are not seriously thought of as being descended from animals. Mpande, a Zulu king, was saluted as the Great Black Elephant, not because he was a member of an elephant clan, but as a description of his great power and his rich darkness. It was an honorific nickname, like that accorded to the English king Richard the Lion-Heart. In many African regions, the old initiation ceremonies represented human-animals but these were symbolic of the animal side of raw human nature before it had been reformed by the initiation rituals. True, some tribes have stories, which may find expression in masked dances, in which distant ancestors are supposed to have had animal forms, but this rather undefined totemic idea is widely scattered and not totally African.

In the religions of the East there is little of the ancient animal magic and totemism of some of the Siberian tribes. There are ideas of reincarnation and transmigration from animal to man, and vice versa, in Hinduism and Buddhism, but in no sense can the animal be considered the ancestor of the man. These religions derive from a rich philosophical background, and not from the simple animal ancestor cults which are most properly described as totemistic.

In both Norse and Celtic mythology there is a close relationship between gods, heroes and magical animals. Some clans were described in a vague way as being descended from animal ancestors, of which the bear and the wolf seem to have been most popular. But in all their rich poetry, and poetic history, there is little which can truly be said to go back to the world in which totemic beliefs were the accepted explanation of man's place in Nature. One can hardly regard the shape-changing propensities of demigods or witches or werewolves as totemic activities.

The most one can say is that the folklore of Europe is full of animal stories and that this may well imply that in ancient times totemic ideas were common; but mostly they seem to rely simply on the comparison of various human characters with traits of animal behaviour.

Totemism as an idea must be treated as a diffuse subject of much obscurity and confusion. Whatever definition of the totemic cults one may take, there remain confused areas where the totemic merges into other systems of primitive belief. Perhaps it is best to consider it as a useful research tool which had a widespread vogue when introduced by 19th century anthropologists, and which must now be more closely defined and limited to more exact categories of belief before it can become of much practical scientific value. But for those who live within a totemic culture, it is the very basis of their understanding of the world.

(See also GREAT PLAINS INDIANS; NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS; PACIFIC NORTH-WEST INDIANS.)

C. A. BURLAND

Though the Touareg are Moslems, it has been suggested that they were once Christians, for hey use the cross as an amulet

TOUAREG

THESE are the most mysterious and, at the same time, the most easily recognizable race of people in Africa. The men wear a 'veil' which allows only their eyes to be seen through a slit, and this alone gives these tall, robed men a vaguely sinister appearance, especially in the desert when mounted on their racing camels. A genuine Touareg wears the veil inside as well as outside his tent, and only raises it to eat.

The Touareg live in scattered groups throughout the Sahara, especially in those regions which are farthest away from civilization. Born and bred to a nomadic existence, they despise cities and the urban way of life. Yet they are by no means a primitive people, and their aloofness is a matter of choice.

The Touareg belong to the white race. Taller than the general run of Europeans, their average height is six feet; they are small-boned, graceful, and even rather languid in their movements. Yet their history shows them to have been the most dreaded warriors of the Sahara, with a reputation until quite recently for brigandage and rebellion. Today, they are still the great caravanners of the desert.

Though they are nominally Moslems, they are considered by strict Mohammedans to be extremely lax, for they flout the basic religious code in allowing their women to go unveiled, and in fact the degree of liberty permitted their women is unique among Moslems. For not only is a woman entitled to take part in public life, but she can own her own property and even choose her own husband. Before marriage the Touareg girl is permitted to have as many lovers as she likes, though she is expected to be loyal and faithful to the man she eventually marries.

Like all desert-dwellers, the Touareg are very religious in the sense of being conscious and to some extent fearful of forces outside their control. Consequently they rely to a great extent on charms and amulets to ward off misfortune; and one of the objects most used by them is the cross. This has led some ethnologists to suggest that the Touareg were once Christians, for it is difficult to explain otherwise their predilection for this Christian symbol, specifically proscribed by Moslems. The cross appears on a great many items of their equipment – the pommels of camel saddles, the bosses of shields, the handles of swords and even on their spoons.

Like Knights of Old

The theory that the Touareg were actually Christians during the Roman occupation of North Africa may help to explain the unique status of women in Touareg society, for nowhere else in Africa do women have equality with men, let alone so much freedom. The Touareg seem to idolize women, somewhat in the manner that medieval knights in Europe idealized their ladies. As their contribution to this tradition of chivalry, well-born Touareg women devoted themselves to the arts of music and poetry, as the men devoted themselves to war and hunting.

In the sand seas of the central Sahara and the mountain ranges of the Hoggar and Air, where they are still found in their traditional communities, the Touareg retain many of their old customs. Their medicine, for instance, is still based on the efficacy of charms which they combine with barbarous practices picked up from the Arabs. 'Firing', or burning wounds and infections with red-hot irons, is still used for liver complaints, tuberculosis, hernia, and even blindness. Great use is also made of urine and dried dung: the urine of the male camel – but never of the female – is considered excellent for diseases of the skin, while a paste made of dried donkey dung mixed with wood ash is applied to abscesses.

But though Touareg medicine, by Western standards, is a combination of ignorance and superstition, the people themselves have nothing resembling the witch-doctors of pagan Africans. The reason is that they have kept themselves aloof from both black Africa and white Europe, although it is becoming obvious that they cannot resist what we call progress much longer. Camels are their principal source of wealth, and conducting caravans across the sand seas is their principal activity, but both camels and caravans are becoming things of the past. More modern forms of transport are replacing them, and it is increasingly difficult for the Touareg to survive.

The abolition of the slave trade has also affected the situation. During the 19th century, the slave caravans moved continuously across the Sahara to the North African ports. This trade was organized by Arabs, but the running of it was in the hands of the Touareg whose knowledge of the desert and the location of the wells made them the link between Central Africa and the Mediterranean.

Many of the Touareg today are being slowly absorbed into the modern world of factories and machines. The discovery of oil in the Sahara has been, perhaps, the major factor in this change, for oil exploitation has brought American standards as well as methods to the desert. Touaregs can now be found driving Land Rovers, working on oil rigs and laying pipelines, where in the old days any sort of manual labour was considered beneath their dignity. Jobs and wages have led many of the younger men to abandon the traditional way of life and to think in terms of Western values. The veil is discarded; their language (called *Temajegh* when it is spoken and *T'ifinagh* when written) is tending to disappear; and some sort of a house, even if made of mud, is preferred to the traditional tent.

But there are still vast areas of the Sahara where the Touareg live as their ancestors did, notably in the Hoggar Mountains of southern Algeria and the Air Mountains of the Republic of Niger. These tribesmen continue to measure their wealth in terms of their camel herds and the number of serfs or retainers who serve them. They still wear the veil and the long cotton gown, usually black, which has always been the distinguishing garb of the genuine member of their nation. They still live the free, simple and rigorous life of their forefathers. Their food, for instance, is coarse and unvaried – an endless diet of goat's milk and cheese, bread made from millet flour, dates, and only very occasionally, meat. Most of these true nomads are still uneducated in the Western sense, for the children are sent out with the camels and goats instead of attending school.

Lords of the Desert

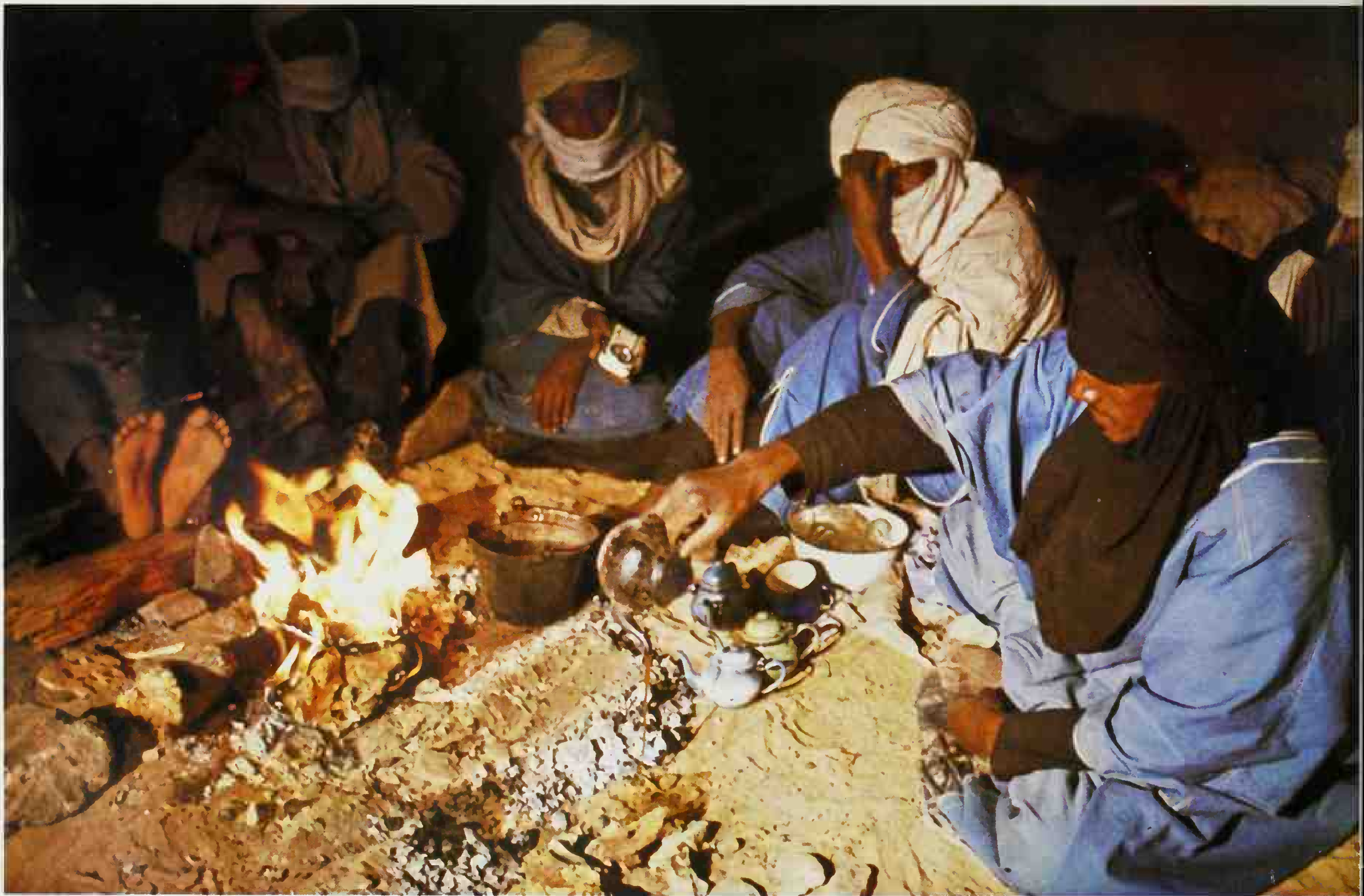
Yet the last of these genuine Touareg retain the classic virtues of their race – independence, pride, courtesy, respect for women, and a simple belief in God. At the same time, it would be unrealistic to regard them as the 'noble savages' of romantic literature. They are manifestly harassed by poverty, malnutrition and disease. It may be hard for the Western observer to understand why they do not try to improve their way of life, except that if you are born in a country of sand and eroded mountains it is very difficult to do so. But the fact is that the old-fashioned Touareg has no desire to change, for he is still convinced that his way of life is preferable to that of the city-dweller.

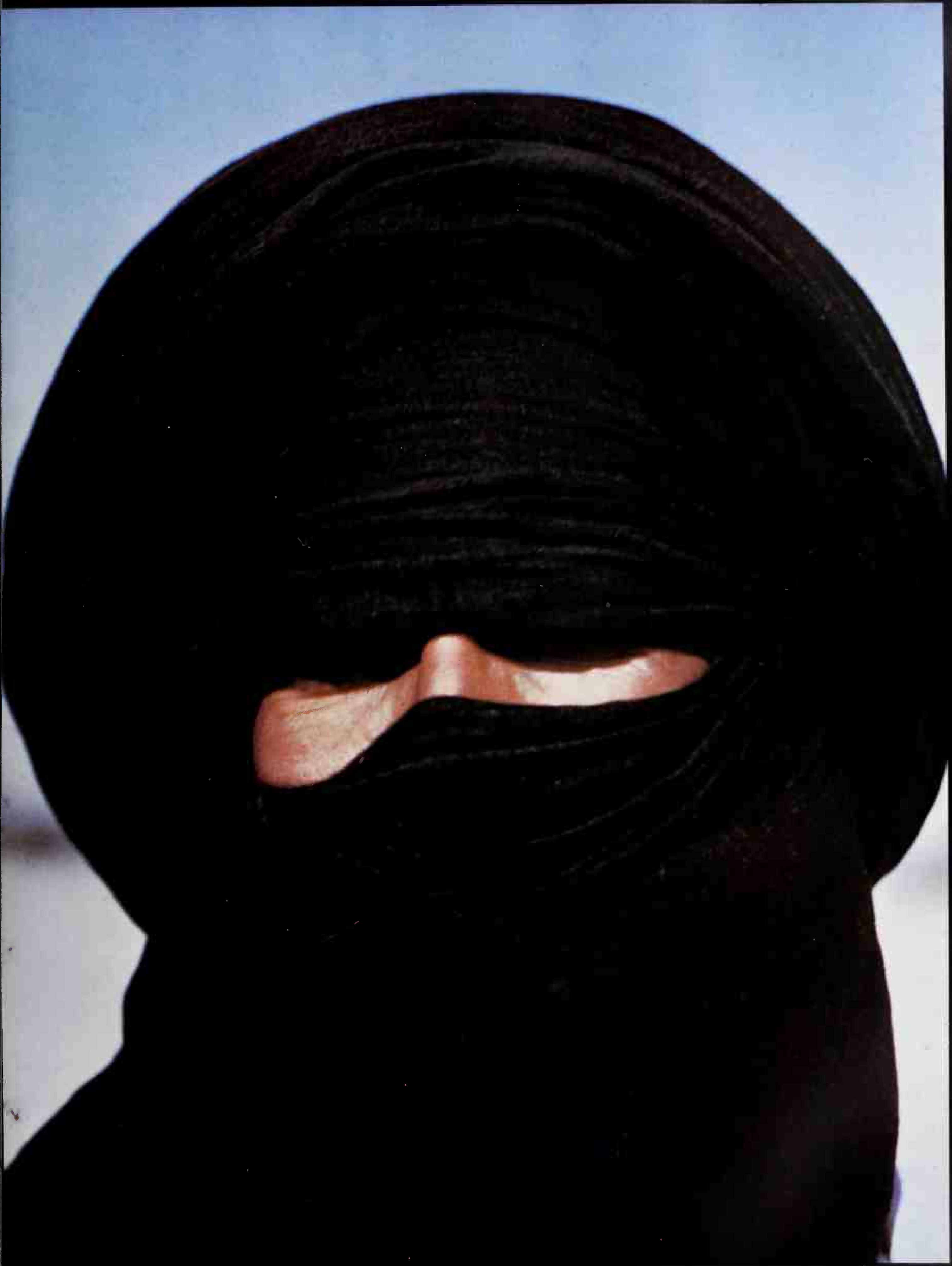
What is happening to the Touareg is that progress is changing the life and philosophy of many of the younger men, while tradition is driving the older generation deeper into the wastelands of the Sahara. But it is extremely unlikely that even the most obstinate of the old guard can continue to keep alive the traditions of the 'Lords of the Desert', as was once their boast. The veiled warrior mounted on his white camel, armed with a spear and shield, will never be seen again, except at folklore festivals put on for the benefit of tourists. Gone, too, are the famous 'courts of love' at which Touareg girls entertained with music and poetry the young warriors who had ridden a hundred miles or more to find perhaps a lover for a few nights, perhaps a wife for a lifetime.

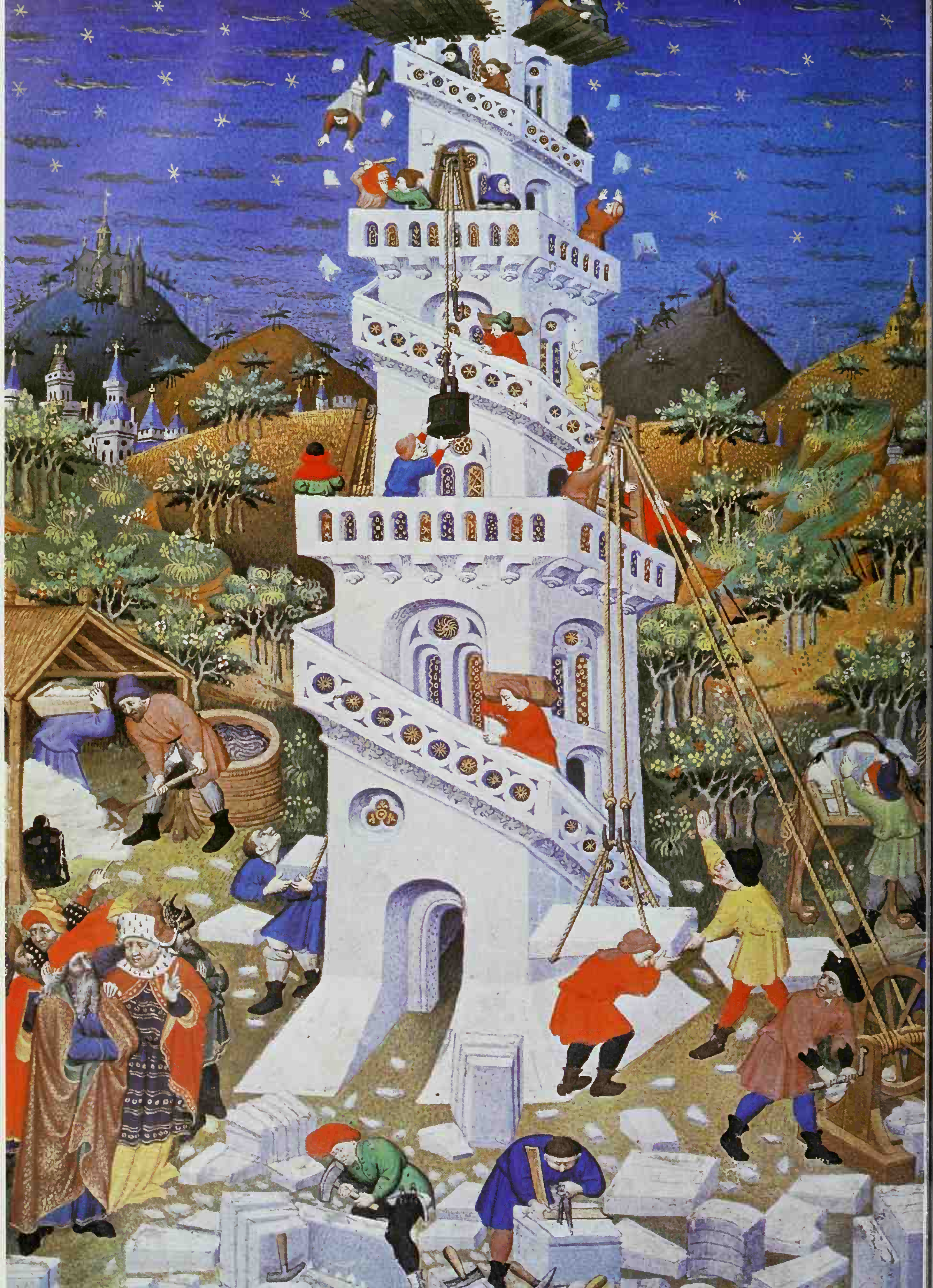
JAMES WELLARD

FURTHER READING: H. T. Norris, *The Tuaregs* (Aris & Phillips, 1975); Francis Rennell Rodl, *People of the Veil* (Humanities, 1966); James Wellard, *Lost Worlds of Africa* (Dutton, 1967).

Below The Touareg are nominally Moslem but they flout orthodoxy by allowing their women to go unveiled; some experts believe they were once Christians, for the cross features as a symbol on many items of their equipment: Touareg men at a tea-drinking ceremony *Right* The men wear a veil which covers the face, except for a slit for the eyes, and gives them a sinister appearance in keeping with their old reputation as dreaded warriors







TOWER OF BABEL

HAT the original language of mankind as Hebrew was assumed in the Judaeo-hristian tradition down into modern imes and, as Sir James Frazer remarked, when the science of philology was in its nfancy, strenuous but necessarily abortive fforts were made to deduce all forms of peech from Hebrew as their original'. The tory of the tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11) was an attempt to explain how he various nations of men, all descended rom the sons of Noah, who with their wives ad survived the Flood, came to speak in a onfusion of tongues'.

When 'the whole earth had one language nd few words', the descendants of Noah nigrated from the east to the land of Shinar Babylonia), where they decided to build a ity, called Babel (Babylon), and a tower with its top in the heavens'. God came own to look at the city and the tower, and aid: 'Behold, they are one people, and hey have all one language; and this is only he beginning of what they will do; and othing that they propose to do will now be mpossible for them.' And God confused heir language and scattered them over the ace of the earth.

This brief story, which so strongly onveys that inability to communicate is one of the great obstacles to man's overweening and potentially godlike power, is based on the *ziggurats* or temple towers of Mesopotamian cities, and perhaps on the confusing medley of tongues spoken by citizens and traders in their streets. A ziggurat was a tall tower which might well look as if its top was in the heavens, often constructed in seven stages which were probably connected with the planets, and evidently regarded as a means of communication between gods and men. The ziggurat of Marduk in Babylon, which some have identified as the original of the tower of Babel, was said to have a shrine at the top to which the god descended each night (see RELIGION).

According to later Jewish traditions, the tower was built in deliberate rebellion against God. Some said it was constructed by Nimrod, 'the first on earth to be a mighty man' and 'a mighty hunter before the Lord' (Genesis, chapter 10, where he is King of Babel), who was a great-grandson of Noah. Nimrod's father bequeathed to him the garments of skins which God had made for Adam and Eve (Genesis, chapter 3), and when Nimrod put them on he became immensely strong and a bold and skilful hunter. He was the chosen king of the descendants of Noah's son Ham, and in his monstrous pride he built the tower so that he could invade heaven and take revenge on God for drowning his ancestors in the Flood.

The tower eventually rose 70 miles high, according to some accounts, and had seven stairways on the eastern side up which the bricklayers climbed, and seven on the western side down which they descended (following the course of the sun). Others said that the tower was so high that it took a year for a hod-carrier to reach the top. If he fell off and was killed, the people did not weep for him but mourned over the brick because it would take so long to get it to the top again. From the top the builders fired arrows into heaven, which fell back to them stained with blood. They assumed they were doing fierce execution among God's court, and continued building with enthusiasm.

In the end God lost patience and with the 70 angels who surround his throne he descended and confused the language of the builders, which caused quarrels and violence. A man would ask his helper for mortar and be given a brick, and after a while would become so angry that he hurled the brick at his helper's head and brained him. The work was abandoned. One third of the tower sank into the earth, one third was destroyed by fire and only one third was left standing. Nimrod was eventually killed by Esau, who robbed him of the sacred garments of skins, which were in turn stolen from him by his brother Jacob.

According to both Jewish and local traditions, the original tower of Babel was a temple of Nabu, or Nebo, master of writing and wisdom, and the god of Borsippa (modern Birs Nimrud), a city close to Babylon.

***eft* The Tower of Babel, from the Bedford Book of Hours, 15th century**

Iowever a trance is induced, whether by drugs r by mystical or magical techniques, the result s that part of consciousness is split off from he whole. The symptoms of trance are readily pparent, but its true nature is still not nderstood

TRANCE

UITE ORDINARY words are often used by ccultists and magicians in a sense different rom their everyday meaning. In the case f the word trance, however, there is no such emantic divergence and a majority of ccultists would have no quarrel with the lictionary definition: 'state suggesting that he soul has passed out of the body; ecstasy, apture, extreme exaltation'.

Such a state can sometimes be induced by physical causes, a brain tumour or, more typically, a blow on the head. I remember a player in a rugby game suffering a trance of this type; he continued to play the game, although perhaps rather more erratically than usual, and it was not until the final whistle had blown and it was seen that he continued to play against a totally non-existent opposing team that his peculiar condition became apparent. It was this aspect of trance – the combination of a grossly abnormal state of mind with the continuation of conventional behaviour patterns and even comprehensible speech – that probably originated the idea that the soul had temporarily left the body. Once this theory had been accepted, it was an easy step to the concept that the soulless body could be used by non-human entities, that the entranced person could become, quite literally, a mouthpiece of the gods.

In many societies the use of such a divine mouthpiece became an established part of the prevailing religious culture; in ancient Greece the Delphic Oracle was consulted not only by citizens of the Greek city-states but by representatives of colonies as far away as Spain, and wherever Hellenic culture was dominant the Delphic Oracle was held in veneration. In pre-Communist Tibet, not only did every major monastery have an individual oracle who, while in trance, answered questions and gave spiritual and mundane advice, but the Dalai Lama and his government had their own state oracle.

Such official oracles did not, of course, have their trance states induced by anything so crude as a blow on the head; in Tibet the oracles almost all appear to have been epileptics, looked upon as people in whom trance could be particularly easily induced, but rhythmic drumming, dancing and (possibly but not certainly) psychedelic drugs were used to achieve the desired disassociation of consciousness. At Delphi, the oracle inhaled the smoke of burning laurel leaves. This would have contained both a small amount of hydrocyanic acid and a certain amount of complex alkaloids, and it is probable that inhaled in sufficient quantity it produced a state of cerebral intoxication highly conducive to trance and other abnormal mental states. In any case, however, it seems likely that as in Tibet, oracles were chosen for their inherent ability to achieve a voluntary disassociation of consciousness.

There is no doubt that trance is most easily attained by the use of such drugs as LSD and *anhalonium* (mescaline), but while the states of consciousness attained in this way seem fundamentally identical with the trances of the mystic and the magician, their effects do not seem to be either as permanent or as profound as those produced by more physically and emotionally demanding techniques, such as those of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola or the frenzied dancing of Haitian Voodoo. In the trance experienced by participants in Voodoo rites the entranced worshipper is not just the mouthpiece of the god but actually becomes the god.

The White Darkness

Voodoo is a synthetic religion, a blend of elements derived from West African religious cults, popular Catholicism and the debased ceremonial magic of the printed grimoires (textbooks of ritual magic) of 18th century France. Its central religious rite is the invocation of the *loa* (gods) by drums, dance and sacrifice, and these invocations normally end in the entrancement and possession ('mounting') of one or more of the participants in the ceremony by the particular loa invoked – each loa has its own particular dance pattern and drum rhythm. Sometimes, however, an unwanted loa makes a spontaneous appearance but in this case it is made clear to it that it is not welcome and the possessed worshipper comes out of his trance fairly quickly.

In the last analysis, all trance, whether mediumistic, drug-induced or the result of mystical, magical or Voodoo techniques, is identical; that is to say, a part of consciousness is split off or disassociated from the whole. Nevertheless, most of those who have experienced trance have been unable to communicate to others even a faint idea of the nature of the subjective experience they have undergone. Fortunately, the late Maya Deren, who was herself frequently possessed by the goddess Erzulie (the Haitian Venus), has left us a clear description of the processes of Voodoo trance, and when due allowance has been made for the cultural variations between Haiti and, say, Tibet, her account throws a great deal of light on the nature of trance in general.

Maya Deren, a maker of avant-garde films with a particular interest in choreography, first visited Haiti in 1947 with the object of filming Haitian dance forms. She began to attend Voodoo rituals, soon realized that the dance could not be separated from the mythology, the rapture from the religion, joined the dance, and was entranced and 'mounted' by the loa Erzulie. She described her experience of entrancement as being 'the white darkness' – a contradiction in terms that is reminiscent of the paradoxes used by mystics of all ages in an attempt to communicate the incommunicable. She wrote: 'Resting . . . I felt a strange numbness . . . I say numbness, but that is inaccurate . . . To be precise I must call it a white darkness, its whiteness a glory and its darkness terror. It is the terror which has the greater force . . . The white darkness starts to shoot up . . . My skull is a drum . . . This sound will drown me . . . The white darkness moves up the veins of my leg like a swift tide rising, rising; is a great force which I cannot sustain or contain, which, surely, will burst my skin. It is too much, too bright, too white for me; this is its darkness. "Mercy!" I scream within me. I hear it echoed by the voices, shrill and unearthly: "Erzulie". The bright darkness floods up through my body, reaches my head, engulfs me. I am sucked down and exploded upward at once. That is all.'

Maya Deren had no memory of her actions while entranced, but as the *hougan* (Voodoo priest) assured her that she showed all the signs of genuine 'mounting' by Erzulie we can be sure that her behaviour pattern followed the conventional lines of possession by this loa. Her first act would have been to perform an elaborate toilet with the consecrated comb, perfume, face-powder and mirror always kept ready in the temple for Erzulie's use. She would have followed this by donning bangles, ear-rings, necklaces and three wedding rings (Erzulie is married to more than one of the male loa).

Her toilet completed, she would have chosen several handsome men to accompany her on a tour of the congregation, shaking hands with the men but extending only her little finger to the women. Following this she would have perhaps asked for songs, dances or delicate food, or she may simply have sat in a chair, flirtatiously basking in the admiration of her worshippers. The whole period of entrancement and divine possession probably extended over two or three hours.

The Magical Method

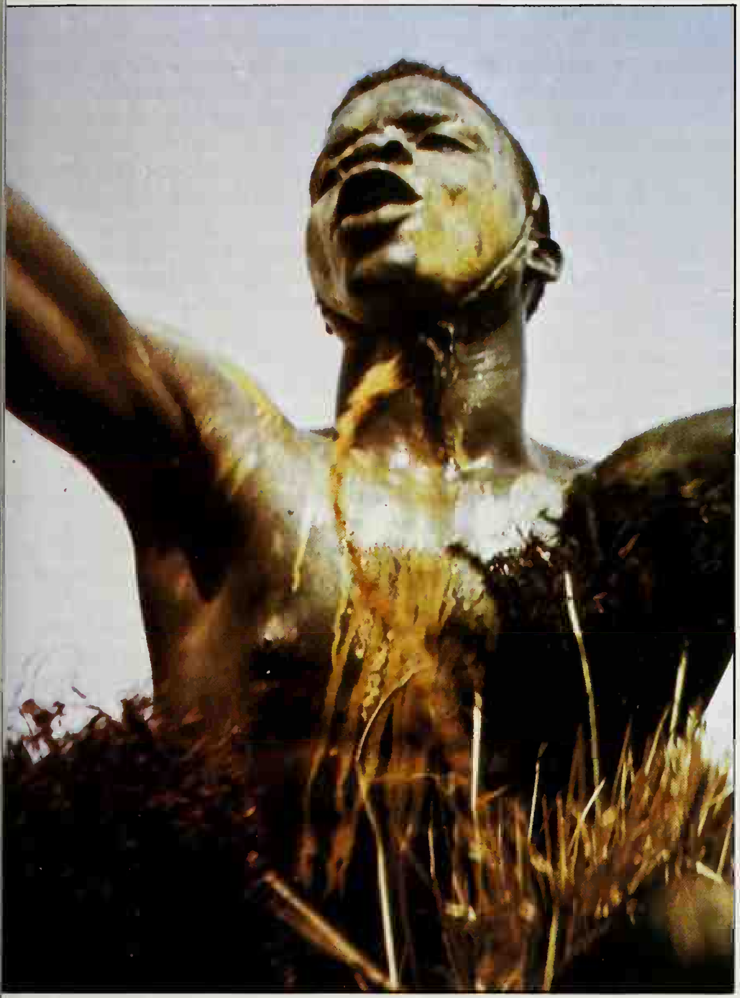
Western magicians have a number of ways of inducing trance, and all of them show some similarity with the techniques of Voodoo, although they do not usually involve the complete cessation of normal consciousness: in some little corner of his mind the magician retains his individuality and can observe the actions performed by the disassociated aspects of his own consciousness.

One of these methods involves the performance of a mystery play (Aleister Crowley particularly recommended the *Bacchae* of Euripides for this purpose) with the actors so strongly identifying themselves with the characters they play that they become those characters. At the Abbey of Thelema in Sicily, Crowley and his disciples performed such a magical version of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, seemingly with considerable success. Years earlier, Crowley had stage-managed the public

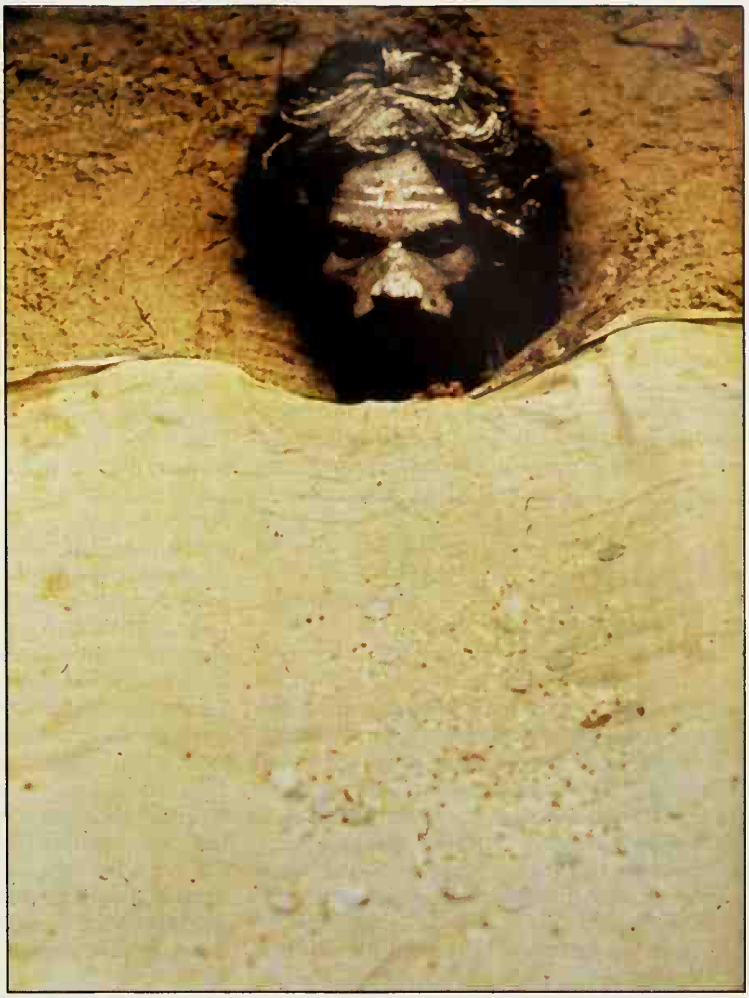
Camera Press

Ian Barry/Magnum

In trance, 'a part of the consciousness is split off and disassociated from the whole': the condition has long been valued because it puts man in touch with planes of experience beyond his normal grasp. Techniques of trance include rhythmic drumming and chanting, as in the Jamaican Pocomania cult *(above left)*, or the dangerous and unsatisfactory use of drugs *(left)*



René Burri/Magnum



Magnum

erformance of a series of dramatic rituals ncorporating music and dance, the *Rites of leusis*, during which the poet Victor euburg became entranced and, according o Crowley, literally inspired (see also ROWLEY).

Curiously enough, the technique of achieving partial trance by the conscious and deliberate identification of oneself with an imagined being or situation has been known and used by non-occultists. The great physiologist Galton once spent a day in London strongly imagining himself as the most hated and evil man in the world; so strongly did his abnormal state, a light trance, change his bearing and appearance that it affected other people. Respectable looking men jostled him off the pavement; women crossed the street to avoid him; shopkeepers falsely stated that the goods he required were out of stock; finally he was violently kicked by an aged and usually docile cab-horse. Similarly, in his novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, John Buchan gave a fictional description of how a wanted man succeeded in being mistaken for a road-mender by persistently imagining himself as one and thinking of nothing but stones, hammers and roads.

Other Western methods of achieving trance and possession are the processes of invocation and evocation (see MAGIC). Here the idea is to achieve 'one-pointedness' by surrounding the practitioners with the symbols of the force invoked, and to achieve the frenzied psychic escape – a form of trance – by 'enflaming oneself with prayer' and chanting the barbarous words of evocation. Once this suspension of everyday consciousness has been achieved, the god invoked is enabled to manifest himself in one or more of the practitioners. In a variant version of this system, sex, sometimes deviant sex, is used to induce trance; in *The Great Beast*, John Symonds gives a fascinating description of how a ceremony of this type, part of the so-called 'Paris Working', resulted in the entranced Victor Neuburg being obsessed by a 'demon' who demanded human sacrifice.

Left The Diolas of Senegal celebrate major festivals with several days of dancing which culminates in a state of collective trance ***Right*** The solitary trance of a yogi; the attainment of ***samadhi*** demands extraordinary discipline to achieve total control over all mental and physical faculties

The word trance is also used in a secondary sense by Western occultists; in this sense it is approximately equivalent to the word 'rapture', and reference is made to the 'Trance of Wonder', the 'Trance of Indifference' and even the 'Trance of Sorrow'. During such a trance, ordinary consciousness is not in any way interrupted; the occultist is able to carry on a conversation or go about his ordinary business, while at the same time undergoing the extraordinary subjective experiences associated with, for example, the Trance of Wonder. In this meaning of the word, every authentic occult operation partakes of the character of trance. Aleister Crowley wrote that: 'The essence of the idea of Trance is indeed contained in that of Magick, which is pre-eminently the transcendental Science and Art. Its method is, in one chief sense, Love, the very key of Trance; and, in another, the passing beyond normal conditions . . . Nor need any man fear to state boldly that every Magical Operation soever is only complete when it is characterised (in one sense or another) by the occurence of Trance. It was ill done to restrict the use of the word to the supersession of dualistic human consciousness by the impersonal and monistic state of Samadhi . . . it is the first necessity as it is the last attainment of Trance to abolish every form and every order of dividuality.'

Interesting, and perhaps important, as such magical trances are, there is no doubt that the types of trance which are most familiar to the layman are those of the Spiritualist medium on the one hand, and of the yogi on the other. Mediums can be divided into three broad groups: the deliberately fraudulent, who are a small minority; the self-deceived, of whom there are a surprisingly large number; and the genuine – genuine not, of course, in the sense that they are necessarily in authentic contact with the dead but in the sense that they enter a trance state. While the phrase 'trance medium' is usually confined to those who lose normal consciousness during a sitting, it seems probable that all genuine mediumship, even the mildest clairvoyance, is characterized by disassociation of some sort or another.

When in deep trance and the mouthpiece

of a 'guide' or other supposedly discarnate communicator, the mental state of the medium seems remarkably similar to that of a Voodoo devotee who has been mounted by one of the loa. He, or she, appears to be the vehicle of a distinct personality in its own right, and Professor H. H. Price has commented that, 'If all this is just subconscious dramatization on the medium's part it is comparable to Ruth Draper [a famous comedienne of the time] at her very best.'

One of the main differences between Spiritualistic and Voodoo possession is that the latter almost always follows a highly conventional pattern, the loa using the entranced worshipper's body in the way that it is expected to use it. This difference, however, originates in contrasting cultural patterns, not in any profound variation between one sort of trance and another.

The same is true of the trances experienced by devotees of Yoga. While it may seem that there is an enormous gulf between the silent entrancement of a yogi experiencing Samadhi and the behaviour of the medium possessed by her spirit guide, there is considerable evidence to show that on a physiological and psychological level they are undergoing the same experience. This is not, of course, to say that the two are spiritually of equal value.

Finally, we come back to our dictionary definition of trance – and we find it not so much a definition as a description. For today we are only a very little nearer to comprehending the real nature of trance (and its first cousin, hypnotic trance) than were our ancestors. It is true that there are a multitude of psychological explanations – Freudian, Jungian, Behaviourist – of the phenomenon, but the very fact that so many conflicting hypotheses can be defended so vigorously by men of intellectual integrity is an indication that we are still far from understanding what trance really is.

(See also DRUGS; ECSTASY; MEDITATION; MEDIUMS; MESMER; ORACLES; POSSESSION; SEX; SHAMAN; VOODOO; YOGA.)

FRANCIS KING

FURTHER READING: M. Deren, *Divine Horsemen* (Thames & Hudson, 2nd edn. 1969); M. Lambek, *Human Spirits* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981); Stewart Wavell *Trance* (Allen & Unwin, 1966).

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

AT THE HEIGHT of its popularity in the 1970s, Transcendental Meditation (TM) was practised by millions of people worldwide. Developed by the Indian guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, it claimed to be a synthesis of ancient philosophy and meditation techniques and offered the student a drug-free state of self-realization and enlightenment.

Maharishi claimed to have learned everything he knew from Guru Dev, a reclusive holy man who lived in an isolated mountain cave deep in the Himalayas in the early 1950s. After two years of seclusion with him, Maharishi emerged into the world to teach TM in southern India, and published a book, *The Beacon Light of the Himalayas*, which laid great emphasis on the original teachings of the Indian scriptures. In 1958 he established the Spiritual Regeneration Movement in Madras, before setting off to spread his message around the world.

Maharishi set up an ashram in the foothills of the Himalayas, where he taught all who came to learn his techniques, including many Westerners. By 1970 he was teaching several hundred eager students, and by 1975 he had already trained nearly ten thousand seekers as teachers of TM. In other parts of the world – notably in California – TM became something of a craze, and by 1975 there were an estimated 550,000 people who had learned the technique in the US alone. The Maharishi International University (MIU) was set up in Switzerland, a focus for thousands hoping to expand their spiritual horizons.

TM, its practitioners stressed, could not – and should not – be learned without the benefit of a trained teacher. Indeed, it is hard to find any details of the actual technique involved in any of the many writings on the subject. Essentially, it is a method of stilling the conscious mind through a series of mental exercises and breathing techniques so that a stage of complete serenity and mystical awareness is reached.

Central to TM is the use of mantras, special sounds that are not chanted, but vibrated within the student as he meditates. As Peter Russell says in *The TM Technique* (1976): 'In TM the mantra has no associations and, more importantly, is not chanted – either verbally or mentally. The mantra is not so much an object for the attention to be focused on as a vehicle on which the attention rests and which leads it down to the subtler levels of thinking.'

However, once again it is stressed that a mantra is a personal thing which is not transferable from student to student, and may even cause damage if it is so abused.

Paradoxical Philosophy

The philosophy behind TM is, like many other Eastern spiritual systems, paradoxically complex and simple at the same time. It is based on the idea that the technique can help elevate the student's awareness through at least five 'states of consciousness', finally reaching 'cosmic consciousness'. As the student progresses through these stages, all stress and inner toxins – both physical and spiritual – will fall away. The Maharishi claimed that a state of stress was an abnormal state, and cosmic consciousness was normality. At the fifth state of consciousness the pure Self is seen as 'becoming a permanent feature of awareness', and is known as Self-realization. Maharishi said that the enlightened man gained 'freedom from bondage', saying: 'It is not the action or its fruits which bind a man; rather it is the inability to maintain freedom which becomes a means of bondage.' He also stressed that one should not give up the material world to become a recluse, but use TM in order to function more efficiently at all levels. He often quoted the greatest test of his system as being 'the ability to stand in the middle of Manhattan and still maintain the experience of the Self.'

Practitioners of TM have made some dramatic claims for the technique, and a number of scientific tests appear to have backed up at least some of them. In the 1970s it was claimed that TM enabled people to access the right hemisphere of the brain, the part that deals in intuition and creativity, as easily as they have access to the logical left-brain. Yet, as Peter Russell points out: 'TM is more than just a turn to right hemisphere activity – if it were only that it would be little different from sitting down and listening to good music. TM is a transcending of both types of mental activity.'

Dr Jean-Paul Banquet, working at Harvard, showed that when the practitioner reached a particularly deep state of meditation, a corresponding burst of faster brain activity and a marked increase in synchronization between the front and rear of the brain centres was recorded. Control groups who merely relaxed quickly showed an increase in left-brain activity, which suggested that they were consciously trying to relax.

Other, more spectacular, side effects of TM have been reported, including a kind of 'remote viewing' (sometimes known as 'travelling clairvoyance'), and even physical levitation has been demonstrated. The claims for this latter talent have provoked sceptical comment, for it resembles more a sort of energetic hopping about in the lotus position – even such physical activity, however, appears to be beyond the abilities of critics.

In the 1970s, when many famous people flocked to the Maharishi to learn TM, it achieved something of a cult status, and (as is often the way with such 'high profile' movements) dissension and accusations of commercial impropriety soon spoiled its image. Today TM is practised by relatively few, having been superseded by the many self-development 'workshops' of the New Age. Yet the Maharishi's teachings are not without relevance, and have helped a great many people to a wider understanding of themselves and their part in the world. One of his strongest points, perhaps, was his insistence on looking for the positive in every individual and situation. He never spoke of evil, only of good, stressing that Man's true condition is happiness. He said:

'A happy man would be able to see the unhappiness of others much more than an unhappy man. An unhappy man is busy suffering himself, he has no time to see the suffering of others. Compassion is not awake in an unhappy, miserable mind. But compassion and kindness are awake in a man who is happy, who is peaceful.' LYNN PICKNETT

FURTHER READING: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Meditations* (Bantam Books, 1968); Peter Russell, *The TM Technique* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976).

The tradition still persists that buried treasure is accursed; perhaps a relic from the days when treasure-seekers had to protect themselves against demons and spirits who would resist man's attempts to plunder the earth

TREASURE MAGIC

THE LURE of buried treasure has fascinated man for centuries. Burial mounds, prehistoric monuments, Iron Age hill forts, and sometimes natural outcrops of rock, have all been regarded as likely sites of buried hoards, providing an irresistible temptation to grave robbers and other vandals, despite the fact that comparatively little gold has been discovered interred with the dead. The majority of deposits of gold and silver that have come to light have consisted simply of wealth hidden in times of danger, when the safest place to conceal it was below the earth's surface.

It is true, of course, that some treasure has been found in burial sites, as for example, the gold cape discovered at Mold, Flintshire, on a site haunted by a knight in golden armour. The famous find of treasure at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk and the many discoveries of coins in Roman graves are further instances; but there is good reason to believe that some of the treasure recovered from burial mounds had been placed there at a later date for safekeeping, in the mistaken belief that no treasure seeker would risk angering the ghost of the deceased by invading his grave.

Traditionally, the domain of the Earth Mother was peopled by hideous spirits, dwarfs, Germanic gnomes, Cornish knockers (spirits of the tin mines), and other treasure-guarding elementals (see CORNWALL; DWARFS; FAIRIES), to whom supplication and sometimes sacrifices had to be made before the earth could be disturbed. Even then, the most elaborate magical ceremonies were undertaken before disturbing the soil. It is said that when Irish grave robbers discovered only calcined bones and ashes in a grave, they assumed that the fairies had transformed the gold into this form in order to outwit them.

Terrifying treasure guardians were supposed to lie in wait, deep within the bowels of the earth, ready to curse the sacrilegious sorcerer's apprentice unprotected by magic. Dragons were among the most frequently encountered monsters (see DRAGON), as were phantom dogs, usually jet black, extremely fierce and hideous. On the other hand, in some legends, there are references to dogs which actually led the treasure seeker to the hidden hoard. In later anecdotes, the treasure guardian was often Satan or one of the minor fiends of hell.

The Vibrating Ring

Elaborate magical rites were considered necessary for the discovery of the treasure and for its successful recovery. Divining for metals or hidden veins of ore by means of a forked hazel twig, a device borrowed from the miners of Germany, was the method usually employed, but to be really effective the twig had to be cut from the tree on St John's Eve. Dactylomancy, or divination by means of a magic ring, was also popular among the treasure conjurers, the ring being suspended on a fine thread over a round table marked with the letters of the alphabet. The ring, as it travelled or vibrated over the table, stopped at the various letters, supplying answers to the questions asked. In 1577 Robert Mantell, an Essex alchemist, was in trouble with the authorities for having in his possession 'a familiar in a ring', who guided him in his treasure-hunting exploits.

Another method in common use was scrying or crystal gazing, in which the conjurer was accompanied by a pure young boy, that is one who had not yet attained puberty. Catoptromancy or mirror magic was also used, the glass being suspended over a holy well, where it reflected the secrets hidden in the water. In hydromancy, a thin film of oil was spread upon the surface of a bowl of water upon which would then be seen, usually in symbolic form, the site where the treasure lay hidden.

Once the treasure had been located, the conjurer and his assistant had to protect themselves from the anticipated anger of the ghost, phantom dog, dragon or demon, by a complicated system of rituals. Often, a magic circle some 30 feet in circumference would be drawn, at the centre of which the magician stood, wand in hand, invoking the demon of the treasure by name. The position of the planets was also considered, and it was the generally accepted view that Sunday was the most favourable time for the start of operations. Treasure-guarding demons expected to be paid for their information with a human sacrifice, a demand usually modified to a dog, cat, or black cock following a blasphemous baptism. A human offering was by no means excluded, however, and as late as 1841 there occurred a case in which a boy was murdered by some Italian treasure-seekers.

Among the many terrifying beings, which jealously guarded buried treasure and might have to be appeased or outwitted by treasure seekers, were dragons, phantoms dogs, even Satan or one of the minor fiends of Hell. There were also the elemental spirits of the earth, such as dwarfs and gnomes. It is said that some Irish grave robbers believed the gnomes or fairies had cheated them by turning buried gold into bones and ashes: the gnomes of Blackgang count their treasure

Picturepoint, London

A Snorting Devil

During the 16th and 17th centuries it was taken for granted that any disturbance of a burial mound containing treasure would be followed at once by a furious outburst of thunder. It is recorded that at the very time that the famous wizard Dr John Dee (see DEE) brought to light a hoard of gold in Brecknockshire, 'a mighty storm and tempest was raised'. Sometimes the barrow would collapse, crushing the pillagers to death beneath a mountain of fallen earth and stone.

There were even occasions when a fiend actually materialized, chasing the audacious tomb robber from the scene. In 1549 William Wycherley, a treasure-hunter from London, fled for his life when a devil, snorting furiously, lunged wildly towards him. He later discovered that his attacker had been a blind horse.

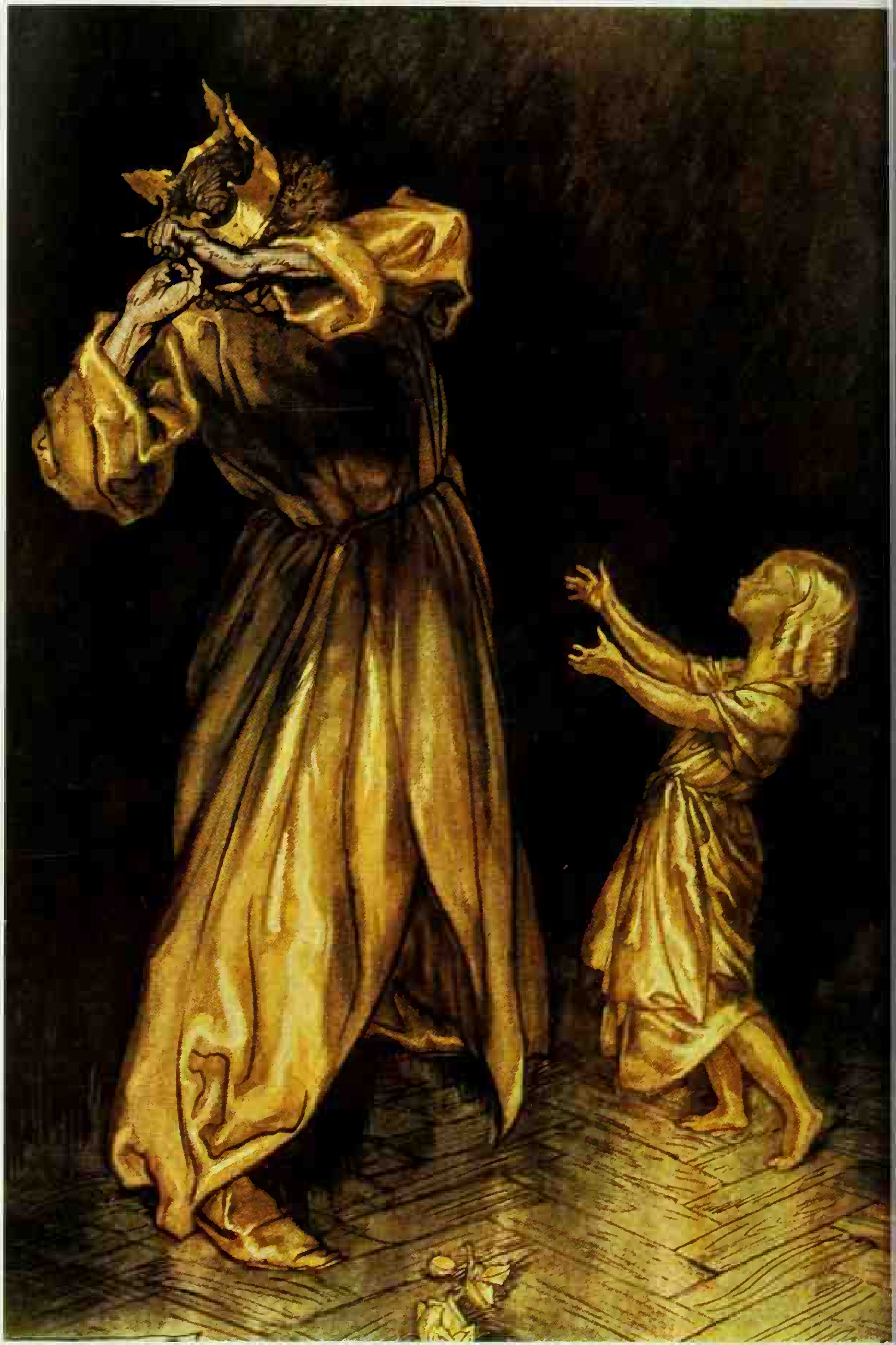
During the height of the treasure-seeking mania in England, the conjurers seem to have concentrated much of their attention on the counties of Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. This says little for their psychic faculties, since most of the recorded discoveries of treasure have been made elsewhere.

The authorities seem to have regarded treasure-hunting with suspicion, but even when the law was invoked against the conjurers the penalties were relatively light, for an age when witchcraft was sometimes punished by death. If found guilty, a treasure-magician might be sentenced to stand in the pillory with a whetstone suspended from his neck, or compelled to parade barefoot through the streets of the town, and ordered to limit himself each Friday for 12 months to a strict diet of bread and water. His books, wands and other magical paraphernalia would be burned.

Beneath the Crosses

During the first half of the 16th century there is evidence to suggest that a number of superstitious individuals began to bury their surplus gold beneath the stone crosses which usually stood at the crossroads outside the villages; presumably they imagined that their property would be inviolate on such sacred sites. The result was perhaps predictable. The treasure-conjurers immediately transferred their attentions from burial mounds to this novel and extremely profitable field of exploitation; they destroyed the village crosses without the slightest compunction.

Indeed, the Witchcraft Act of 1542 makes special provision for this offence in a clause beginning: 'Whereas divers and sundry persons unlawfully have devised and practised invocations and conjurations of spirits, pretending by such means to understand and



Those who seek gold, the elixir of power, must sometimes pay too great a price to fulfill their desires; legend says that treasure-guarding spirits often demanded a life in return for gold. There is a story that King Midas, who asked the gods to turn to gold all that he touched, turned his daughter to gold by mistake: illustration by Arthur Rackham

get knowledge for their own lucre in what place treasure of gold and silver should or might be found or had in the earth or other secret places...', and which goes on to condemn as felons those who 'have digged up and pulled down an infinite number of crosses within this realm'.

The Magic Black Box

The methods used by the treasure-seekers could be applied equally well to divining for lost and stolen property, a practice that was also made illegal by the same act. William Lilly, the famous 17th-century English astrologer, is said to have charged his clients half a crown each for services of this character.

Treasure-hunting reinforced by magic never seems to have completely died out, for it was practised as late as the 19th century by Cunning Murrell, the famous Essex witch-doctor. Very similar techniques were used by gold and oil diviners in the United States of America. Here the conjurer, armed with hazel stick and 'doodle bug', as his magic black box was known, could usually be found prowling in some abandoned graveyard which he believed to be a treasure site.

Many treasure-seekers also turned their attention to the buried treasures of the 17th century sailor Captain Kidd and other pirates which, like the gold of European burial mounds, were supposed to be protected from the searchers by some foul fiend or a dead man's curse.

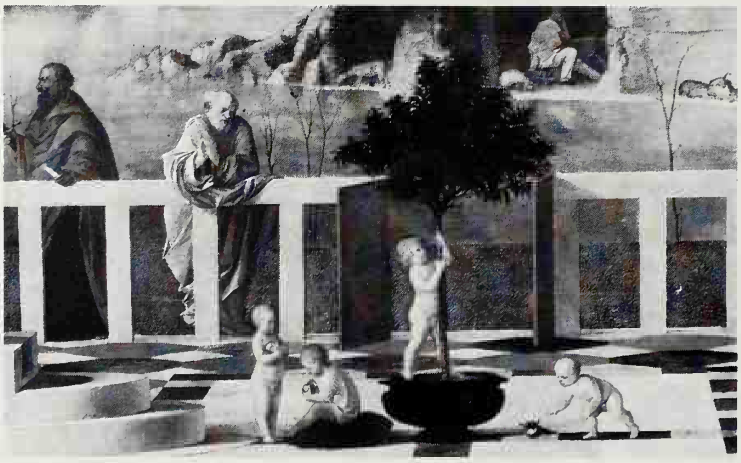
Right up to the present time the tradition persists that all buried treasure is accursed; and even money which has been picked up in the street is considered so unlucky that superstitious people will spit upon it, for safety's sake. No doubt this attitude is a relic of the terror once inspired by the treasure-guarding spirit who had to be propitiated with the gift of a life as the price of that elixir of power, gold.

ERIC MAPLE

Tree of Life

The concept of the universe as a tree is best known in its Scandinavian form, where the ash, Yggdrasil, is the world tree, but also appears in other traditions, in some of which the cosmic tree bears fruit which the gods eat to ensure their immortality; the garden of Eden contained the tree of life (Genesis, chapter 2); in the Cabala, the Tree of Life is a diagram of God, man and the universe.

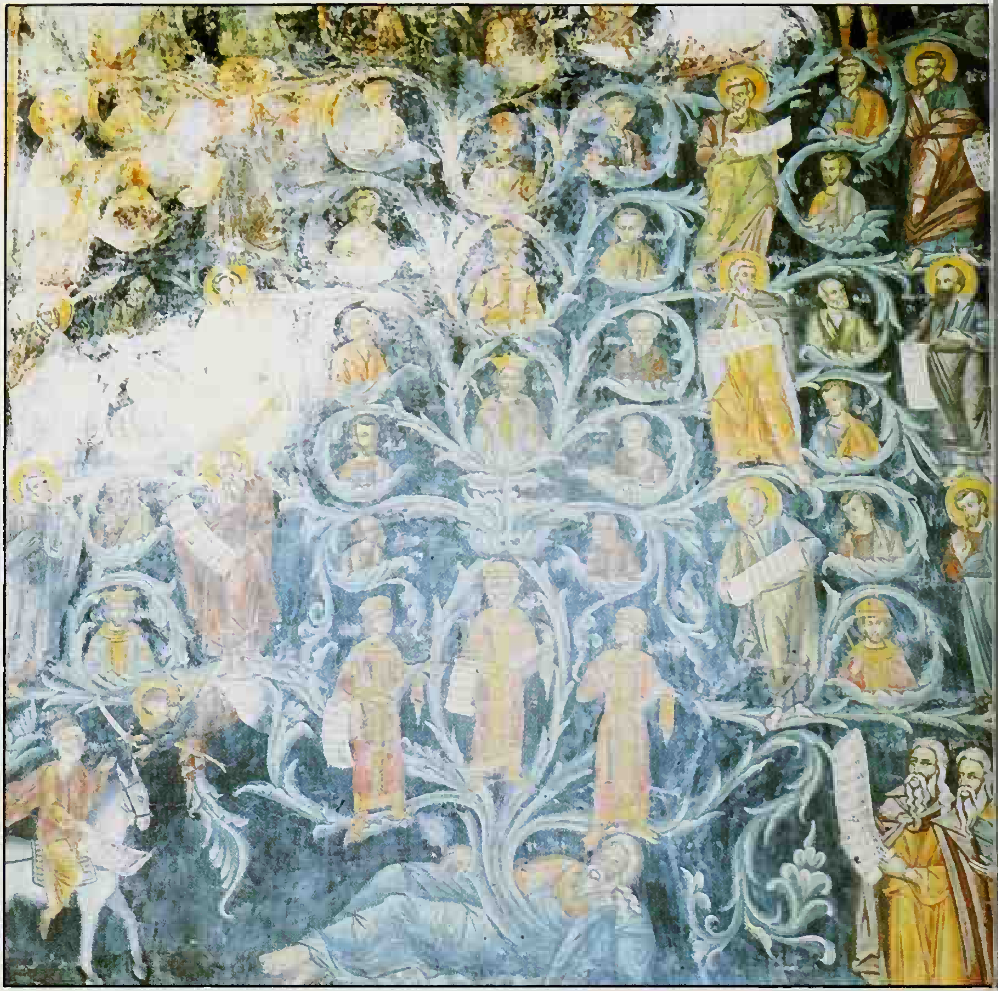
See ASH; CABALA; EVIL; FIRST MAN; TAROT; TREES.

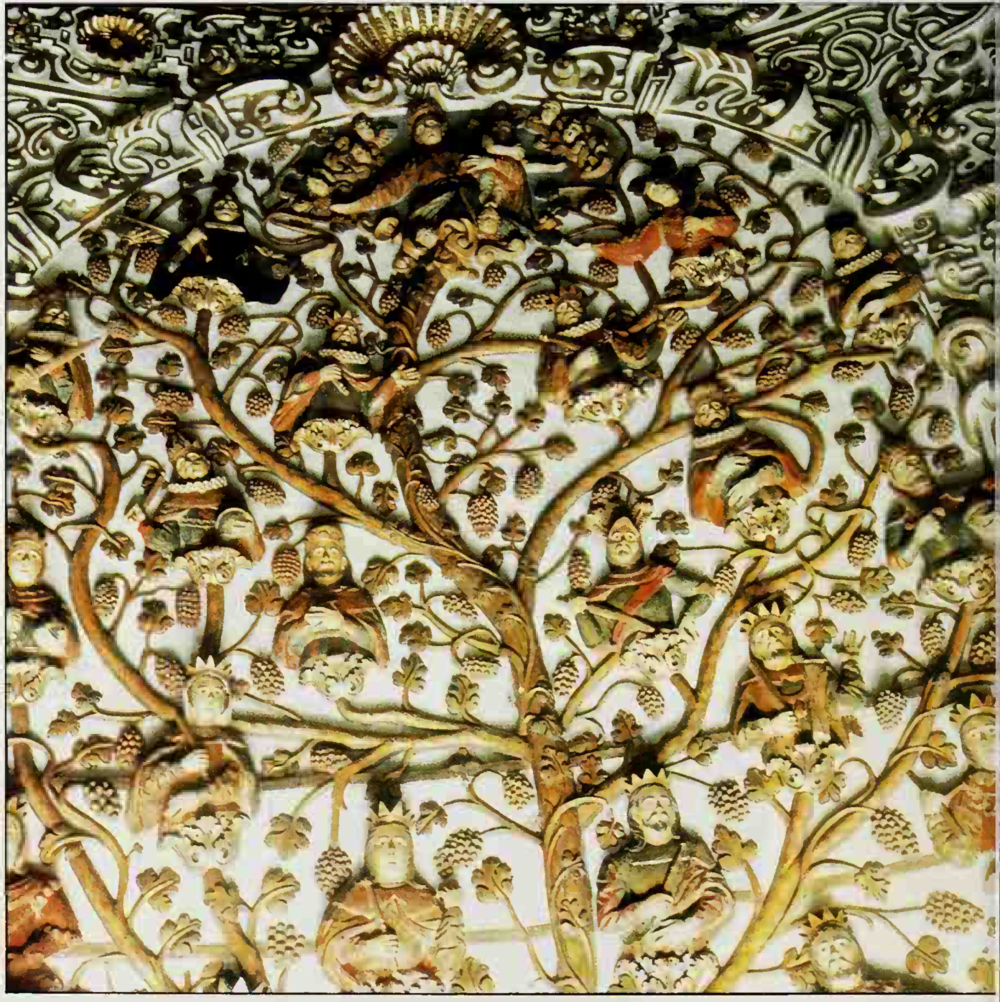


TREES

A great tree with its roots drawing strength from the earth and its head commandingly in the sky, with a lifespan far longer than that of man, with sap flowing like blood in its veins and its leaves rustling in the wind as if it had speech, has frequently been seen as an image of the world and all Nature, as the tree of life. The network of branches springing from the trunk suggests relatedness and a complex pattern unifying all things: *The Co-Existence Tree*, a modern variation on this theme, by E. Box *(previous page)*

Right **The tree of Jesse, showing the descent of David's line in the form of a tree: from Cyprus, 15th century *(above)* Tree of life, from the church of St Dominic in Oaxaca, Mexico *(below)* *Facing page* Genealogical tree of the Mackay family**





At Phlius in the Peloponnese a sacred grove of cypresses provided a refuge for fugitives from justice, and the trees were entwined with prisoners' discarded chains: sacred trees and the gods or spirits associated with them have played a great variety of roles in religion and magic

WITH THE EARLIEST glimmerings of man's intelligence came, one surmises, the need for an explanation – where had he come from, who was responsible, what did it mean? In that far distant epoch all that early man could do, presumably, was to look around him. His environment was land and water, animals and plants. Everywhere around him were plants and, at a time when a very large proportion of the land was covered with forests, trees were dominant. To short-lived man, any tree must have seemed immortal, especially the evergreens which remained changeless whatever the time of year.

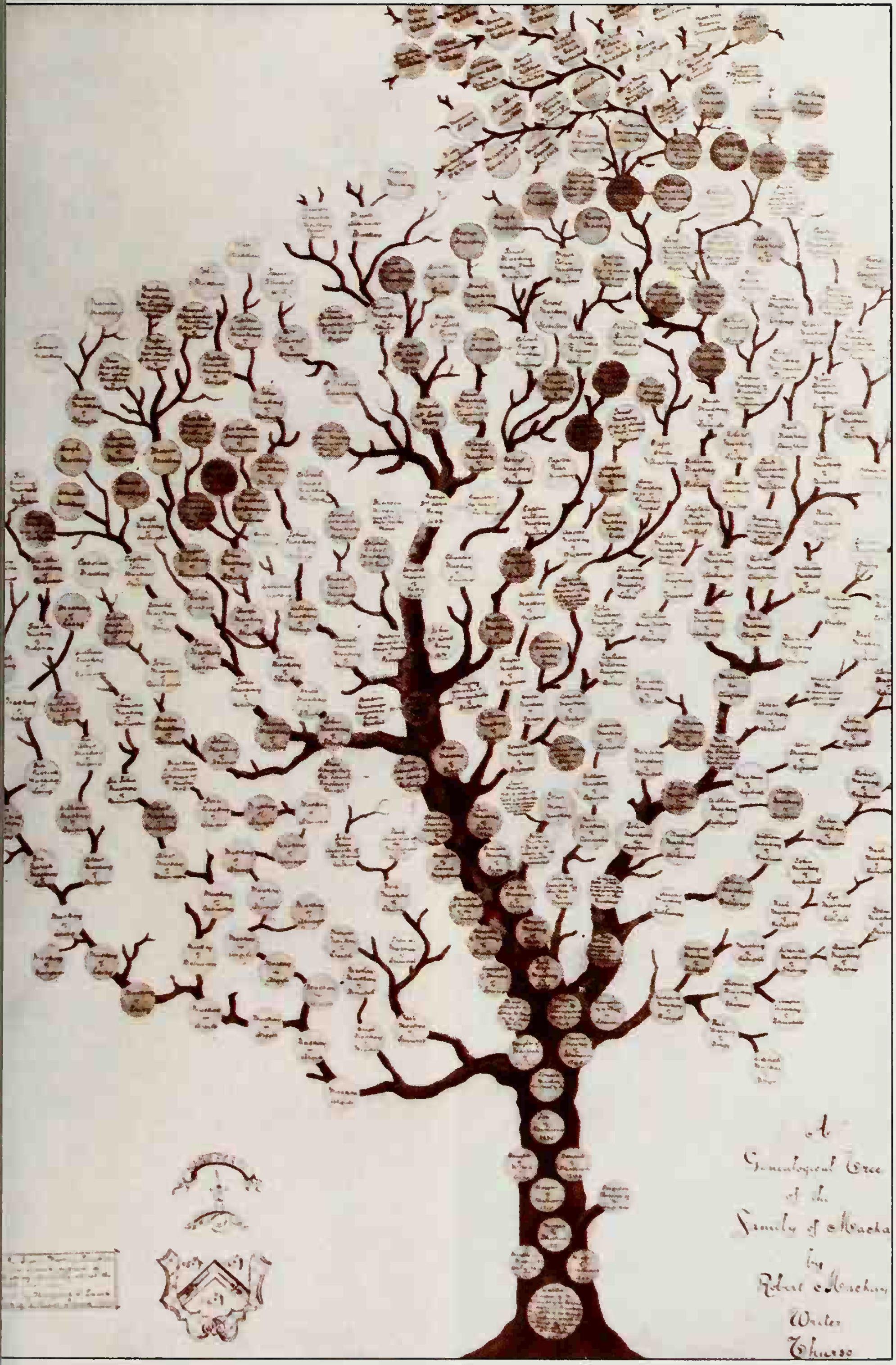
Man's instinct was, perhaps to venerate the trees, and once his need for more or less identifiable deities had crystallized, it was a short step to identify tree with god, or make tree embody deity. It seems clear that trees in general, and some trees in particular, were very widely venerated among early peoples.

We can see how deep-rooted tree worship must have been by examining the earliest records available to us. Representations of sacred trees are to be found on Chaldean and Assyrian engraved cylinders and, from slightly later periods, on temples. The tree seems to have been an essential symbol of Chaldean religion; it is sometimes shown stylized or, later on, more clearly represented as a palm, pomegranate or cypress.

In ancient Egypt, the numerous deities were frequently supposed to inhabit trees, chiefly the sacred sycomores (*Ficus sycomorus*, not to be confused with our sycamore). These sycomores were thought to exist on the borders of the great desert that lay between this world and the next, and the souls of the departed, on reaching these trees, would receive from the deities supplies of food and water. Paintings in the Book of the Dead, and in tombs, depict such meetings on the soul's travels.

In the Old Testament there are many references to sacred groves and to the setting up of altars in these groves and under trees, notably oaks; the history of

To short-lived man, any tree must have seemed immortal, especially the evergreens which remained changeless whatever the time of year



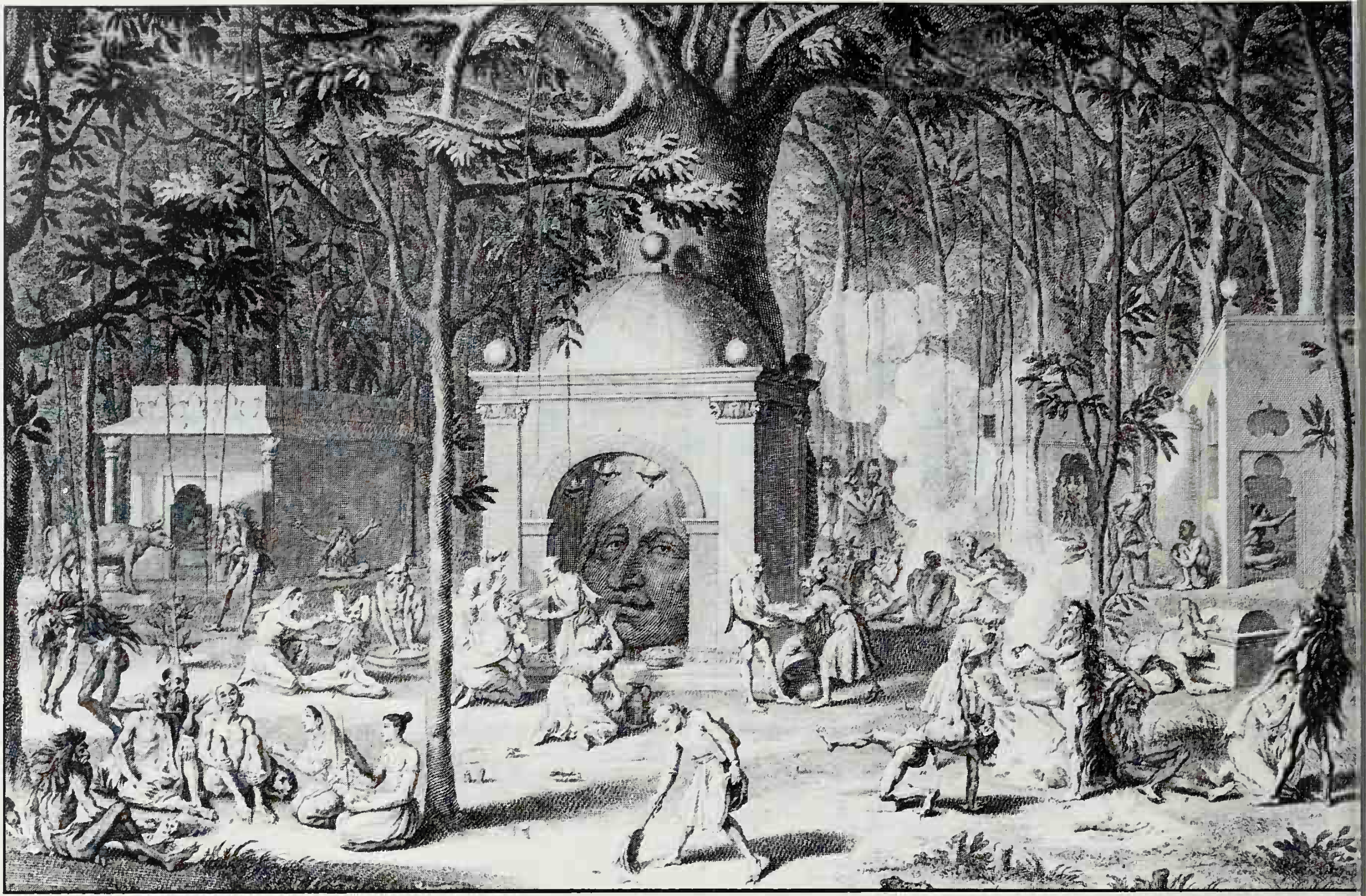
Old Testament religion is of a struggle between the worship of a unique, omnipresent deity and that of a great many lesser ones, such as the Canaanites held in regard. Similarly, the earliest Christian missionaries often had to contend, as in ancient Germany, with sacred groves, trying to destroy them or to build their churches within them.

Even when lesser deities had been overthrown, the need to placate the tree, or to use its magic power, was such that temples carried representations of them, as in the temple of Ezekiel's vision where, echoing Assyrian and Babylonian motifs, the decoration included 'cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Every cherub had two faces; the face of a man toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side' (Ezekiel, chapter 41).

The concept of the tree as a god's dwelling place appears in Persian mythology: the cypress was considered especially sacred, symbol of Ahura Mazda or Ohrmazd, chief of the pantheon. Tree worship was widespread in India; Gautama Buddha was reputedly incarnated as a tree spirit some 43 times, and he received spiritual illumination while meditating under the bo-tree. Many ancient Indian sculptures show a stylized sacred tree, surrounded by devotees and often hung with garlands. On the Stupa of Barhut there is one showing elephants paying homage to a banyan. There were not dissimilar decorations in Mexico.

The God-Boxes

The original object of veneration was doubtless the tree itself, as continued to be the case until very recently, with primitive peoples in Africa, Malaya, Sumatra and elsewhere. Later an erect tree-trunk might suffice, and an altar might be placed before the tree or trunk for offerings. The next logical step is to transform the trunk into a pillar which, like a cut trunk, can be erected in a suitable place. Standing stones in Britain and menhirs in Brittany are examples. The upright stones which represented gods in ancient Phoenicia may well derive from such pillars. In his book *From an Antique Land*, in which he christens such stone pillars 'god-boxes', Sir Julian

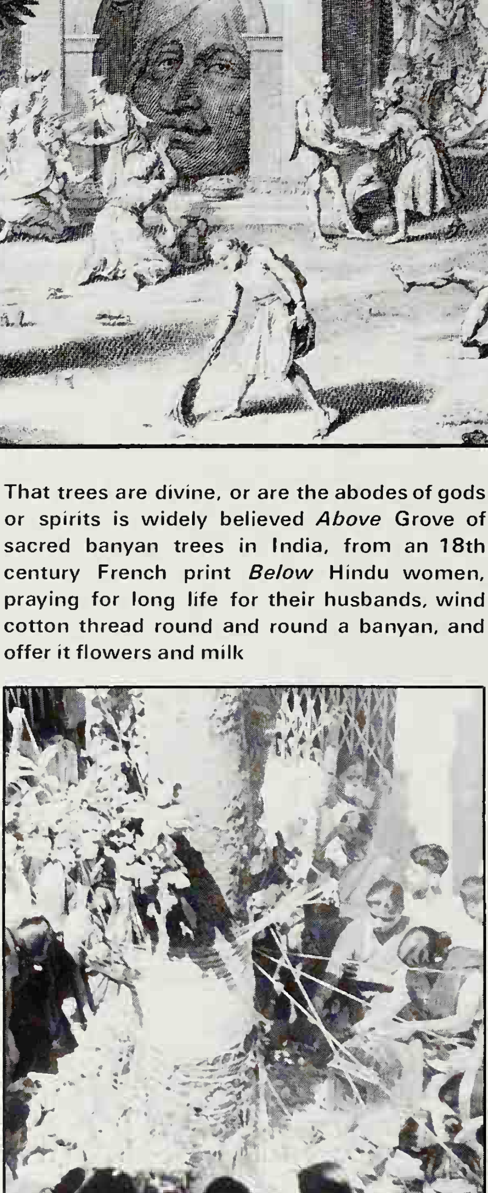


Huxley brought this possibility into his description of the Obelisk Temple at Byblos in the Lebanon as a 'savage forest of primitive stone pillars' (see also STONES).

Later comes the combination of pillar and sacred animal foreshadowed by Ezekiel: the ancient world was full of representations of a pair of animals facing each other on either side of a stone pillar, such as the lionesses over the famous gate at Mycene, or the antique slabs within St Mark's, Venice, which show a stylized tree between pairs of monsters. A further stage in the stylization of the worshipped tree is the placing on it of a mask or cloak to represent the god, and finally the carving of the trunk into a statue.

The statue treatment is, of course, very familiar to us in the religions of ancient Greece and Rome, where personified deities abounded. In both countries gods were worshipped in connection with individual trees or groves. The symbolized tree is frequently seen on Greek paintings, vases and tablets. Many of the deities had particular trees: Artemis was in different places goddess of the cedar, hazel, laurel, myrtle and willow. Pausanias (2nd century AD) records the cult of the 'hanging Artemis' in Arcadia, presumably in reference to a mask hung on a sacred tree. The laurel, sacred to Apollo, became very important both in religious and lay ceremony, as did the olive, Athene's tree. Could the impressive pillars of Greek temples – as indeed of Egyptian ones before them – have derived from tree trunks; like the Byblos obelisks, a formal statement of the sacred grove'. They were certainly decorated with vegetation motifs, while in many places they were combined with a sacred grove planted outside the temple.

That trees are divine, or are the abodes of gods or spirits is widely believed *Above* Grove of sacred banyan trees in India, from an 18th century French print *Below* Hindu women, praying for long life for their husbands, wind cotton thread round and round a banyan, and offer it flowers and milk



B. Bhansali

In his form of Jupiter Feretrius, the chief god of Rome appears to have been a sacred tree, and Rome was reputedly founded where the floating cradle of Romulus and Remus became entangled in the roots of a fig tree, the *ficus Ruminalis*. The 'King of the Wood', the priest of the sacred grove of Diana at Nemi, was the king of the trees, 'the incarnation of the spirit of al vegetation' (see KING). Maximus of Tyre writing during the 2nd century AD, refers to the continuing worship of individual trees notably at the festival of Dionysus, when anyone with a tree in his garden dressed it up to represent the god.

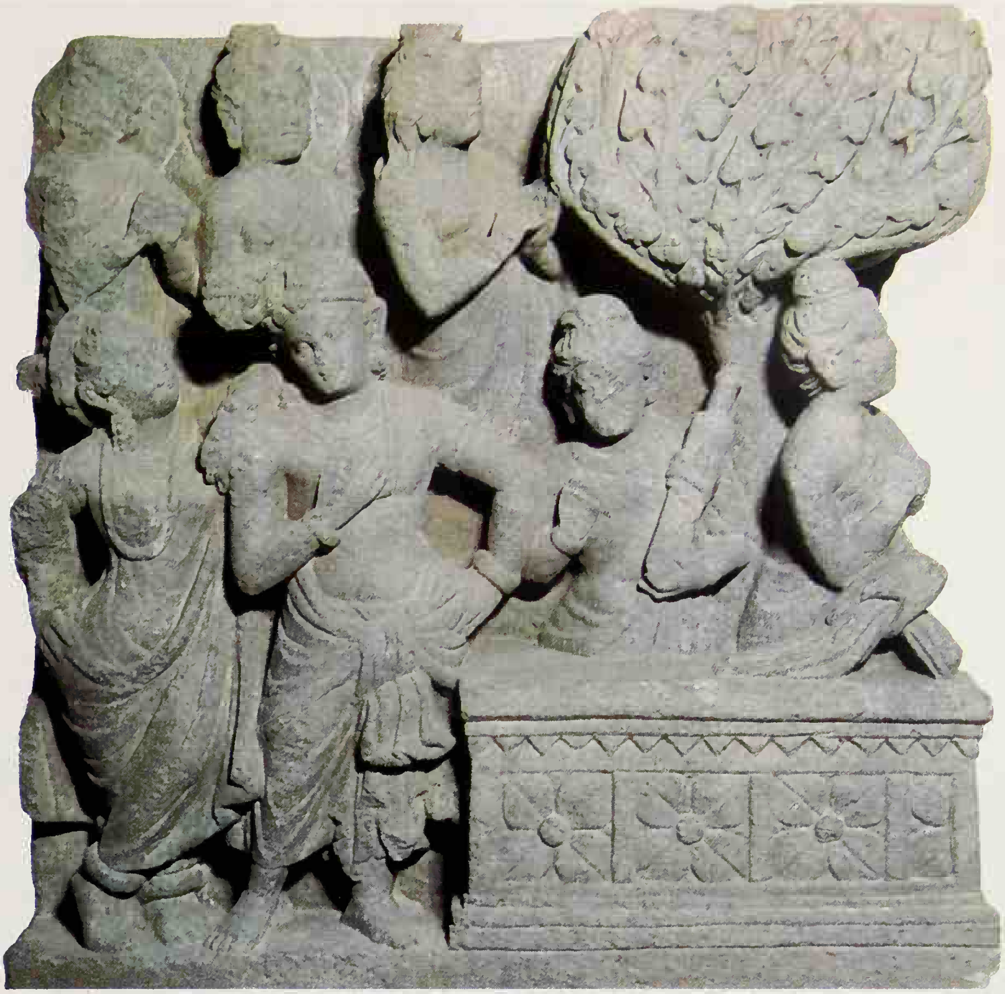
Fruit of Goodly Trees

Throughout Eastern countries there was the practice (and still is, here and there) o hanging gifts on any particularly sacred tree, or attaching pieces of clothing to i so that luck and good health would attend the wearer. In Greece and Rome, sacred trees received the trophies of the chase and the arms of conquerors.

Sacred texts• from Chaldean times describe the use of tree branches at ceremonies while the Israelites, at the Feast of Tabernacles, were told to 'take the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook and you shall rejoice before the Lord

Right The Naga Kalika and his wife comfort Buddha as he takes his seat under the bo-tree: it was while meditating under this tree that the Buddha received spiritual illumination

Below Adam and Eve with the serpent and the tree of knowledge, which bears the forbidden fruit: from a late 13th century manuscript. The other sacred tree in Eden was the tree of life

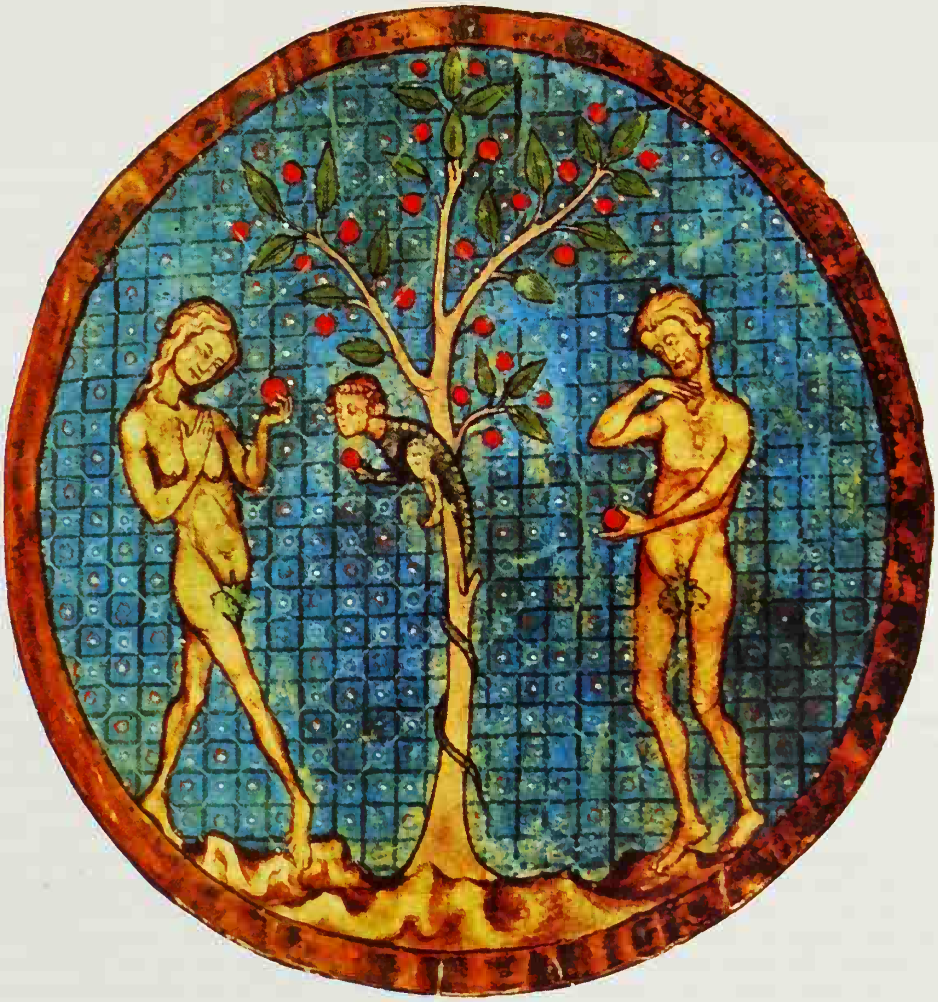


C. M. Dixon

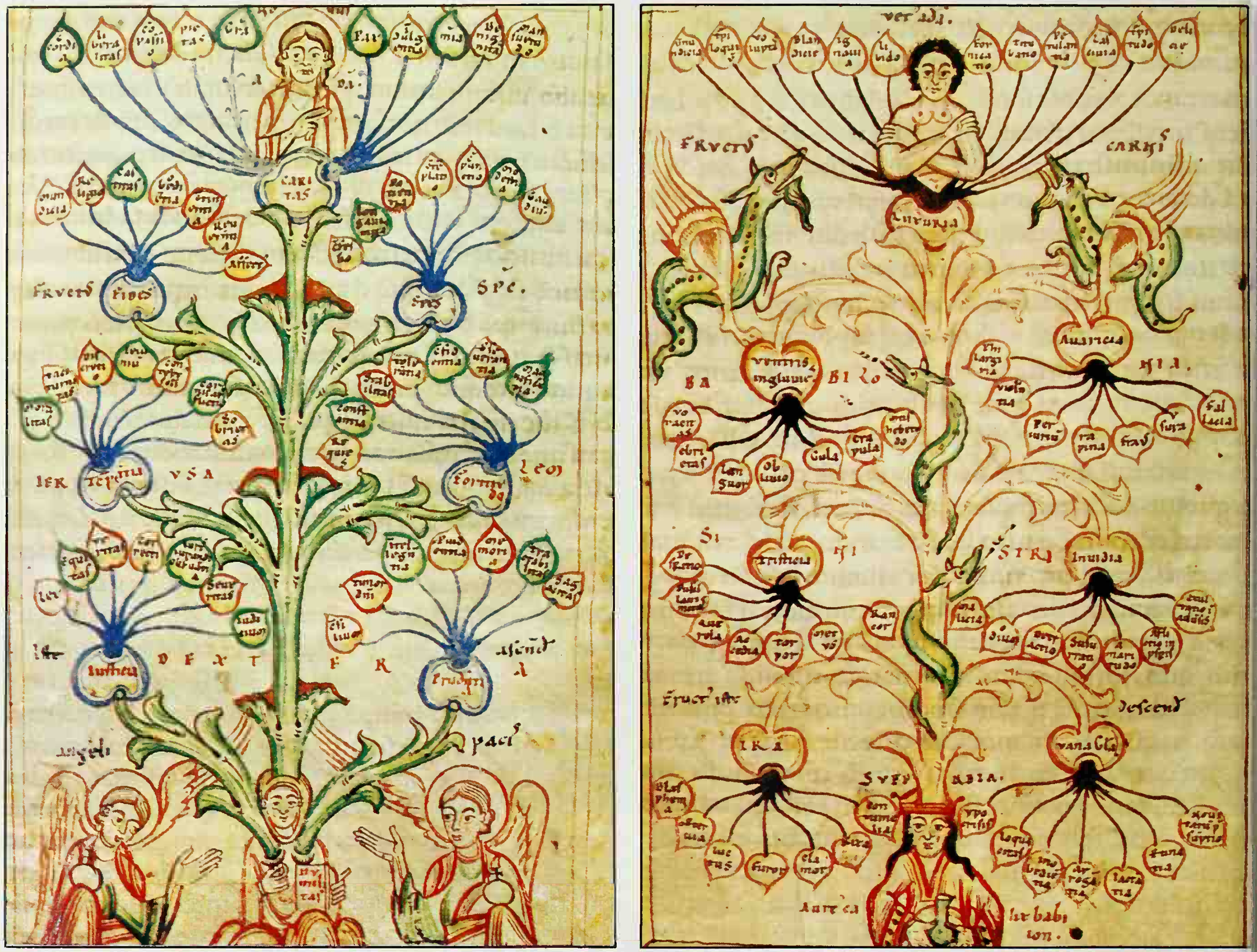
(Leviticus 23.40). In Greece wreaths of the tree of the deity being honoured were both placed upon it and worn by worshippers. In the nine-yearly ceremony of the Daphnephoria in honour of Apollo, a branch of laurel was carried to the temple by the laurel-bearer, a specially chosen young man. Another important Greek festival was Eiresione, a harvest festival and fertility rite combined, in which a branch of laurel or olive, decorated with fruits, cereals and ribbons, was carried and finally fixed over the farm door, its predecessor being ceremonially burnt.

A holy tree might also afford the right of asylum. There are many classical allusions to tree-sanctuaries, such as the holy tree at Ephesus where the Amazons found refuge. Orestes fleeing from the Furies found safety under Apollo's laurel, while at Phlius in the Peloponnese a sacred cypress grove gave fugitives refuge from the normal course of justice, and the trees were entwined with prisoners' discarded chains. Such sanctuaries were pre-Homeric in origin, and often sacred to heroes rather than gods; and beside them the Greek games were often held.

Early rituals were frequently designed to ensure fertility, and in the cradle of civilization the tree mainly involved was the date palm. The representations associated with the date often show kings or priests approaching the tree, holding an object resembling a pine cone, which represents the male flowers of the palm, since it was necessary to fertilize palms artifically to ensure good crops. Long after the connections of trees with specific gods had disappeared, the feeling of the tree as a beneficent fertility symbol remained. From it undoubtedly derives the carrying of various kinds of tree sprig, including myrtle, pine, hawthorn, hazel, oak and ivy, by brides at their weddings, as well as the whole complicated ceremony of the Green Man or Jack-in-the-Green (see GREEN) and the May Day observances (see HAWTHORN; MAY DAY). These included the choice of a King or Queen of the May, almost always finally symbolically sacrificed, who was typically clothed in oak leaves. A Puritan commentator, Stubbs, described the maypole as a 'stinckyng idoll'; after the populace had set it up, he goes on, 'then fall they to banquet and feast, to leape and daunce



British Museum



'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat': virtues *(left)* and vices *(right)* depicted as fruits growing on trees in two German manuscript illustrations of the 12th century, reflecting the tradition of the tree of knowledge in Eden

around it, as the Heathen people did at the dedication of their idolles, whereof this is a perfect patterne, or rather the thyng itself.'

The Long Parliament of 1644 forbade the maypole, and though it came back after the Restoration the leaping and dancing was never quite the same. The importance of the May Day ceremonies, lasting certainly into the 17th century, all over Europe as well as in Britain, testify to the importance and spread of tree worship. In the north European countryside the harvest-May ceremony was exactly parallel to the antique Greek Eiresione. In many ways the Christmas tree and greenery are very similar observances, while the burning of the Yule log, usually of oak, is another symbolic sacrifice for future fruitfulness (see CHRISTMAS; FIR, HOLLY AND IVY).

Trees as Oracles

Among the sacred groves of the ancient world one of the most notable was that of the oaks of Zeus at Dodona, which apparently flourished for at least 2000 years. The laurel at Delphi has perhaps achieved more notoriety. The tree oracle was thought to be connected by its roots with the underworld and hence to the wisdom and foreknowledge of the dead. In Mesopotamia the cedar was both deity and oracle; it was sacred to the god Ea, whose name was supposedly engraved on its innermost core.

Many oracular trees are mentioned in the Old Testament, such as the 'tree of the diviners' at Shechem, mentioned in the book of Judges (9.37); 'the tree of the revealer' in Genesis (12.6); and the mulberry trees which gave David the signal to attack the Philistines (2 Samuel, chapter 5). Tree oracles are recorded from Armenia, Arabia and Persia, while in Rome there was a prophetic ilex grove on the Aventine hill. Tree omens remained important to the Romans, among many other types of augury; major examples are the withering of laurels which foretold Nero's death, and the fall of a cypress which did the same for Domitian.

The Scythians practised divination with the aid of willow rods, and the Druids used 'omen sticks', perhaps of fruit branches in similar manner. Such wands and rods lead on to sceptres, heralds' wands, generals' staffs and perhaps even the policeman's truncheon — all symbols of power and inviolability, partly deriving from the original sacredness of the tree. In a rathe different field there is the divining rod, fo the finding of water, treasure or metal Such rods were cut from all manner of trees notably hazel but including fruit trees willow, blackthorn and mistletoe, wit special ceremony at specific times (se DOWSING; WAND).

In many societies, people have believed i lesser spirits who inhabit trees. They were responsible for the well-being o their trees, and sometimes of other plant and animals, and if not propitiated migh be hostile to humans. Those most simila to man were likely to be least hostile.

The jinn of ancient Arabia, for example inhabited trees and thickets among othe places, and were monstrous creature capable of assuming different forms (se JINN). Unfriendly Egyptian monsters o similar type inhabited trees or posts an were likely to waylay the spirits of the dea on their difficult journey. Similar monster appear in the Bible, translated as 'satyrs or 'devils', but in the original they ar 'hairy monsters', and similar to jinn.

Greek and Roman mythology has a wid range of wood-inhabiting creatures, includ ing the centaur and cyclops, haunter of forests, and the man-goat combination

The Greenwood

Enforced to seek some covert nigh at hand,
A shady grove not far away they spied,
That promised aid the tempest to withstand:
Whose lofty trees yclad with summer's pride,
Did spread so broad, that heaven's light did hide,
Not pierceable with power of any star:
And all within were paths and alleys wide,
With footing worn, and leading inward far:
Fair harbour that them seems: so in they
entered are.
And forth they pass, with pleasure forward led,
Joying to hear the birds' sweet harmony,
Which therein shrouded from the tempest dread,
Seemed in their song to scorn the cruel sky.
Much can they praise the trees so straight and
high,
The sailing Pine, the Cedar proud and tall,
The vine-prop Elm, the Poplar never dry,
The builder Oak, sole king of forests all,
The Aspen good for staves, the Cypress funeral.
The Laurel, mede of mighty Conquerors
And Poets sage, the Fir that weepeth still,
The Willow worn of forlorn Paramours,
The Yew obedient to the bender's will,
The Birch for shafts, the Sallow for the mill,
The Myrrh sweet bleeding in the bitter wound,
The Warlike Beech, the Ash for nothing ill,
The fruitful Olive, and the Platane round,
The carver Holm, the Maple seldom inward
sound.

Spenser *The Faerie Queene*

of pans and dryads. Pans had many human attributes; protectors of herds, they were generally friendly to man, but by no means beyond playing unkind tricks on him. Satyrs and sileni, and their Roman counterparts, fauns and silvani, were more bestial; Hesiod described these wood spirits as 'a useless and crafty tribe'. Within the last century Greek peasants believed in malicious demons which were half human and half goat. Many of these creatures later became specific: Pan, Silenus and Silvanus became particular spirits, representations of their class (see PAN: SATYRS).

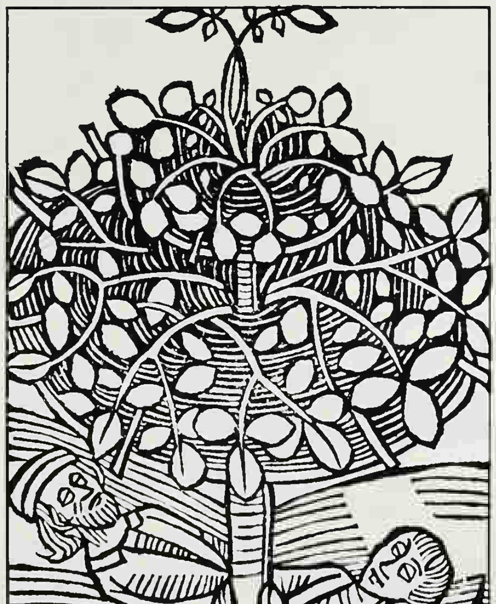
The spirits most closely connected with trees were the female hamadryads. Consorts of the sileni, it was into their care that Aphrodite put the infant Aeneas. When they died, the trees did too. There was also a whole family of nymphs linked with trees – Rhoea with the pomegranate, Daphne with laurel, Helike with willow, Philyra with lime. Tales such as that of Daphne turned into a laurel to escape from Apollo (see APOLLO) are probably inversions of older associations. Lucian's parody *Verae Historiae* describes vines, part of which were in the form of girls; if you tried to pick the grapes growing from their fingers they cried in agony. It was frequently held that trees bled if cut. The reverse is shown by legends surrounding elder – a basically evil tree in which witches were supposed to reside. If you cut an elder branch, some old woman living nearby would be sure to appear with her arm in a sling. There was always a strong feeling that it was bad luck to cut down a tree, particularly those especially associated with fairies or tree spirits like hawthorn, oak, birch and rowan. In Dalmatia, within the last century, it was customary to sacrifice a chicken before cutting down a tree.

East and West alike have tales of spirits, elves, pixies and similar creatures inhabiting trees, especially in central and northern Europe. Such were the Scandinavian 'wild people' covered in moss, the German moss-women, the Tyrolean wild women, the Russian wood demon, often one-eyed, all of whom lived in woods. The Japanese had wood-spirits with a man's body, hawk's head and claws, and a proboscis, which emerged from eggs; the primitive South Americans a wood-ghost who lured men to death (see WILDWOOD).

The Tree of Life

The concept of the tree as the universe is best known in its Scandinavian form, where the ash, Yggdrasil, was the world tree (see ASH); in India it was the fig, Asvattha. But the idea is found in many other parts of the globe. With this tree the world of man rises in a mountain, where the gods live; the tree's trunk springs from this mountain, its outspread branches forming or supporting the sky, and the stars and planets, while its roots reach into the abyss or underworld, forerunner of hell. The fact that the branches held the stars may account for the frequent Eastern jeweller's conception of golden trees hung with jewels. An infinity of symbolic detail accompanies the different parts of the world-tree. Metal world-trees were conceived in China and Russia. Charlemagne destroyed the Saxon 'Irmensul' or World-pillar, which was a tree-trunk representation of this belief.

A tree of immortality, like other conifers, the yew was planted in graveyards, and so it came to be believed that to sleep in its shade meant death: 15th century illustration



Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

The cosmic tree often bore fruits which the gods ate to ensure their immortality: and so it became a tree of life. The Persian *haoma* and Indian *soma* are examples of such life-giving trees; and so of course are the mystical trees of the paradise from which Adam and Eve were expelled – the tree of life and the tree of knowledge (see FIRST MAN). Man was created within this paradise and, if he spent a righteous life, would return to another, such as that described by Esdras in which were 'twelve trees laden with divers fruits' as well as a tree of life. The Talmud (the code of Jewish law) specifies two paradises, connected by a pillar, up which the souls of the righteous ascend on the sabbath to enjoy the light of the Divine Majesty. In the Cabala, the structure of the universe is conceived in terms of the 'tree of life' (see CABALA). Indian, Chinese and South American legends mention the souls of the dead climbing into heaven up the trunk of a tree.

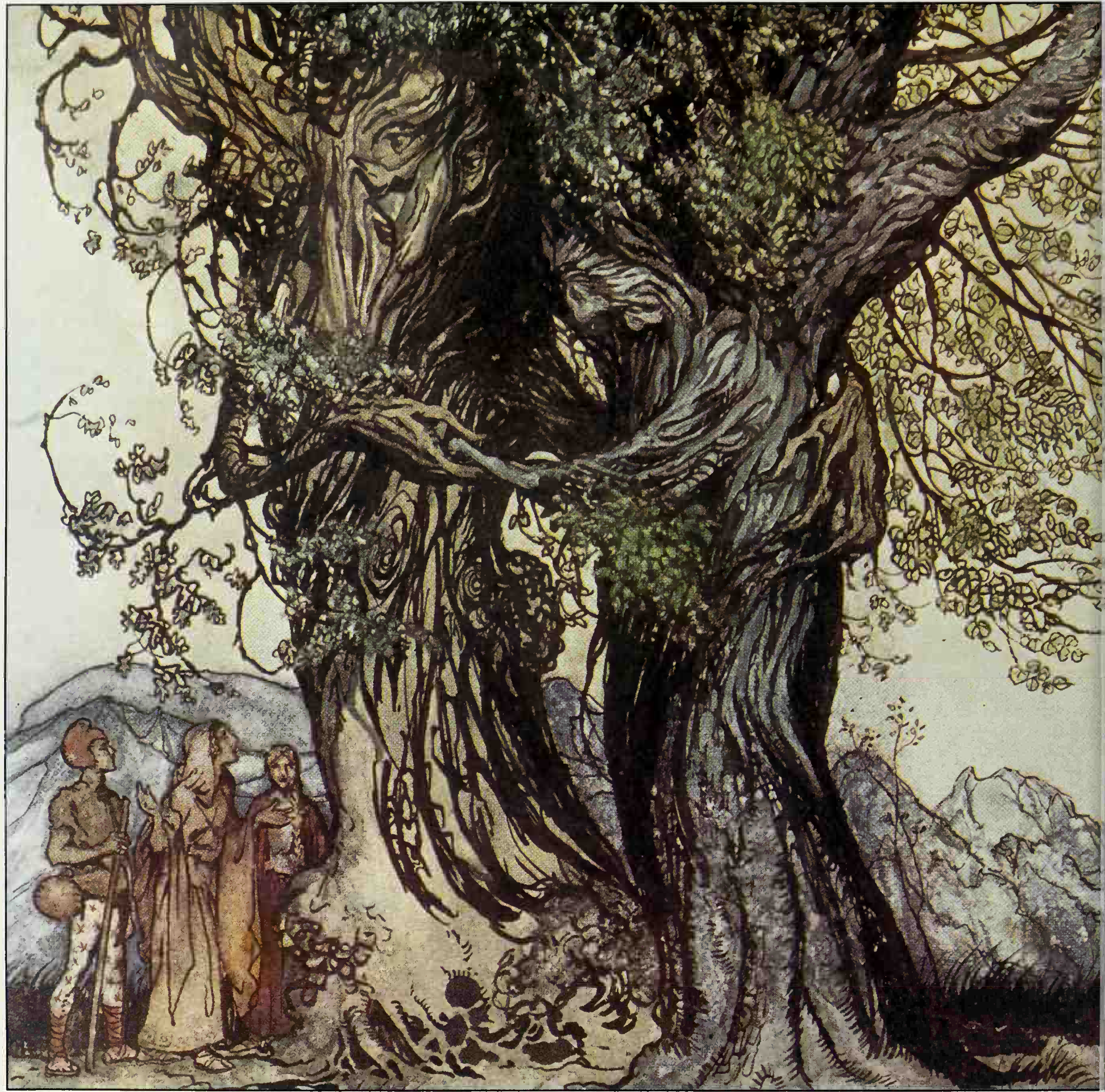
In India the tree of life and knowledge was, yet again, the fig. In the Koran, paradise – the 'seventh heaven' – contains the enormous Tooba tree, covered with many kinds of fruit, and from which rivers spring, flowing with water, milk, honey and wine.

In Greek myth the garden of the Hesperides is supported on Mount Atlas, which Herodotus describes as the Pillar of Heaven; Hercules overcame the multi-headed dragon that guarded the sacred tree and snatched its golden apples, the fruits of knowledge.

Family Trees

These stories show how deeply the sense of sacred trees was fixed in man's mind. He came to regard the tree as embodying earth, heaven and hell, as the paradise of the departed and even as the origin of the human species, as well as a symbol of immortality. Many widely separated mythologies describe the origin of the human race from trees. In the Norse *Edda*, Odin and his brothers change two trees on the seashore into male and female humans who become the parents of mankind. One Greek story was that men had germinated from tree seeds: Hesiod specified ash, but in the *Odyssey* it was the oak.

These stories link up with such myths as the story of the birth of Adonis, who appeared when the tree into which his



Philemon the Oak and Baucis the Linden Tree, **by Arthur Rackham: Philemon and Baucis were a devoted husband and wife who after death were turned into trees by Jupiter, their branches intertwining at the top**

mother Myrrha had been transformed was struck by a sword. Attis originated in an almond, and was later imprisoned by Cybele in a pine tree, from which every spring he was reborn. Parallel with Attis is Osiris, whose image was annually imprisoned in a hollowed pine log, which was burned a year later. From these legends came the pine cone as a symbol of resurrection. Many Greek and Roman gods were supposed to have been born under a tree.

This notion is inverted in the widespread custom of planting trees to celebrate the births of children, whose progress could be forecast by the trees' behaviour – a practice of the Romans, reported equally among less civilized peoples from, for example, western Africa and New Guinea. Such trees, if they survived, became 'family trees', and it seems likely that surnames based on tree names are a result of such associations.

It goes almost without saying that the trees which became particularly revered for various reasons, notably the ash, birch, hawthorn, hazel, holly, oak and rowan in north temperate countries, were protective against evil and its manifestations – witches, fairies and the like. Pieces of these trees, especially birch and rowan, would safeguard the individual if carried and his house or his cattle if fixed to porch or byre. Some trees protected against lightning, such as bay laurel, elm, holly, oak and olive; some indeed were reputed to have sprung from lightning. A birch, fir, or other tree is still placed on houses being built and on bridges, dams and other large constructions, to avert any disaster.

(See also ANIMISM; BUILDERS' RITES CRETE: CROSS; DRUIDS; ORACLES; VEGETATION SPIRITS; and articles on individua trees.)

A. J. HUXLEY

FURTHER READING: J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (St Martin's Press, 1980); C Mills, *The Tree of Mythology* (Gordon Press 1976); J. H. Philpot, *The Sacred Tree* (Gordon Press, 1977).

'Trickster is comic relief; he is psychic catharsis on a deep and vital level; he is a hero whose own evolution perhaps mirrors that of mankind . . .'

TRICKSTER

THE MYTHOLOGICAL character generically called Trickster has many dimensions and roles. Often he is called Trickster-Transformer, to emphasize the fact that he is not single-natured, but a culture hero who transforms aspects of the world for man's benefit, as well as a player of pranks. The ethnologist Paul Radin, author of a pioneering study of this figure, defines the totality of Trickster as 'at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself'. Radin found Trickster prominently in the myths of the Winnebago Indians, a tribe from the Nebraska area. But he found him also in various forms in the mythology of nearly every North American Indian tribe.

Generally, Trickster is the hero of a group of myths or tales, usually only loosely interrelated, which is called a cycle. He is pictured as a primordial being, who existed from the beginning of things or at least from soon afterwards. The Blackfoot and Crow Indians give their trickster-transformer the name of 'Old Man', but they do not see him as a doddering ancient. He is Old Man because he is ageless, as old as time.

Most other tribes give their trickster an animal name: Rabbit or Hare in the east and south-east of America, Bluejay or Mink in the north-west, Raven on the Pacific coast of Canada, Spider among some Siouan peoples and, among tribes of the Plains, the Great Basin, the south-west and California the incomparable Coyote. The Crow Indians' 'Old Man' is sometimes also known as 'Old Man Coyote'.

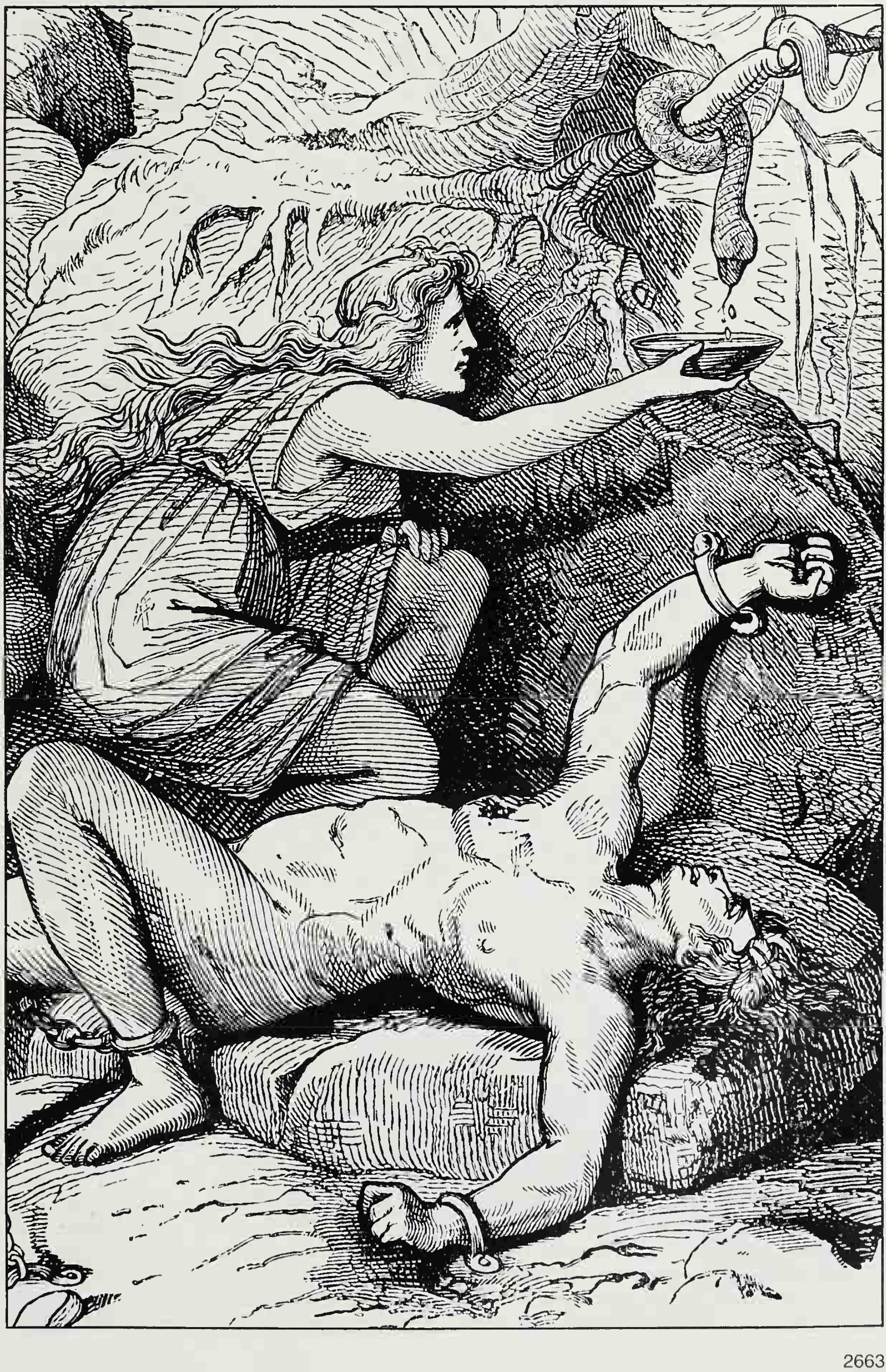
Most of these animals have reputations, in reality, for being clever or mischievous. But the animal form of Trickster is more metaphoric than literal. He is not a little furry creature with cunning ways. He possesses and embodies the essence of the animal – or of animalism, in general – and it is unrewarding to try to pin down his form, precisely and consistently.

Within the same story there may be mention of Coyote's tail, and of his hands. Raven is sometimes described in a decidedly human way, but then he pulls on his 'Raven mask' and costume, and flies off. We must take Trickster as he comes – seeming man-shaped here, seeming an animal there, seeming a giant or a monster or merely shapeless elsewhere. As a supernatural being he can change shape if he wishes; and quite often, he can set parts of his body free in an independent existence.

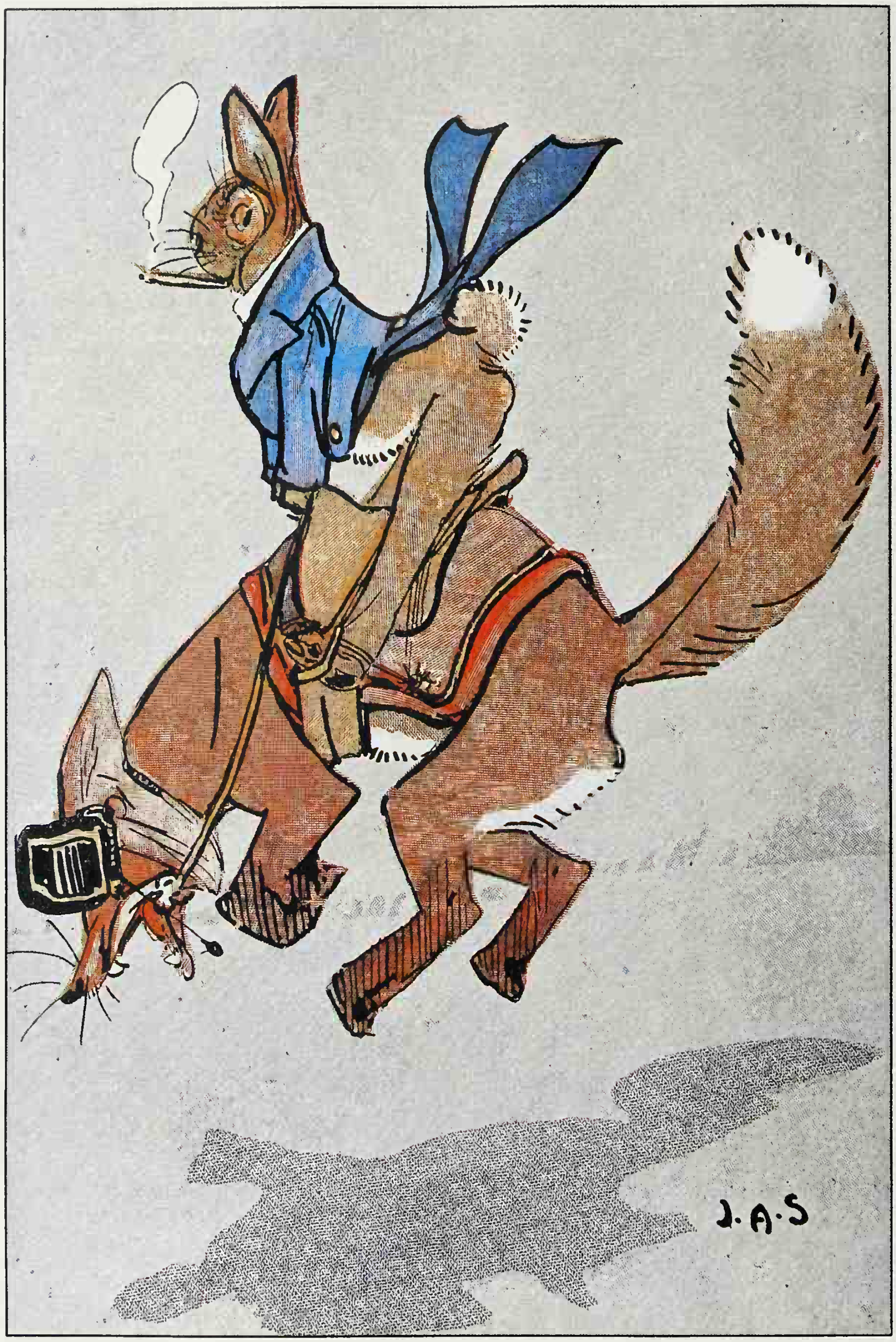
Though he may bear the name of a reputedly wily creature, Trickster is not always clever. In some of the most crudely enjoyable tales he is the fool, whose stupidity leads him into trouble or causes him to be tricked by other creatures. One recurring plot shows him setting a part of his body, usually his anus, a task. It fails and he foolishly punishes it, thereby causing himself great pain. The Winnebago Trickster finds that his right arm quarrels and fights with his left, wounding it severely and painfully. These comic blunderings have been explained as a mythic expression of life on an animal level – instinctual, lacking in self-awareness, with an undeveloped consciousness.

Trickster is usually highly curious, unable to leave well alone, unable to avoid interfering in the doings of others, usually with disastrous results all round. Several tales show Coyote getting his head stuck in a buffalo skull because he had to peer inside to watch a ceremony being performed by mice, or flies. Comparable tales reflect his stubbornness: he is obsessively, mindlessly persistent when he wants something, and his wants are on a primeval level. He is a creature of his appetites, and these are usually a voracious hunger and an equally voracious and gross sexuality. Raven is the hungriest North American trickster, constantly led into trouble by his lust for food – as when he dives to the sea-bed to steal a fisherman's bait, is caught by the hook and loses his beak. The Siouan

The Scandinavian god Loki has been interpreted as a trickster figure, mischievous, amoral or sometimes evil, a shape-changer who plays comic or revolting pranks but is also a culture hero who brings benefits to men: 19th century illustration of Loki in chains



Mary Evans Picture Library



Trickster is shown finding a land of women without men and teaching them about sex by practical example. Many Indian tales echo the Winnebago stories of Trickster's enormous penis: once he stupidly mistakes it for a flagpole, and another time he sends it off to rape a chief's daughter by, as it were, remote control.

In all such tales we are seeing man's 'animal nature' in action. Other aspects of this nature are less comic, reflecting the vicious amorality of a being who knows nothing of ethical or moral values. Trickster lies and cheats and steals and kills, without guilt or hint of conscience. He talks Deer or Buffalo to the edge of a precipice, and then pushes him over for supper; Coyote cons Porcupine into a jumping contest with some meat as the prize, making Porcupine forget that he cannot jump. Here is Trickster less doltish, more crafty, but also cruel and treacherous. He does not always escape the consequences of his actions: it is often Trickster who is credited with introducing death and pain into the world; but in a Maidu tale it is Coyote's own son who is the first creature to suffer death.

The Theft of Fire

Lacking values and any sense of propriety, Trickster naturally comes into conflict with customs, rules, laws and taboos. In the widely told tale of Coyote learning to juggle with his own eyes, he is told by his instructor never to take his eyes out more than three times a day, or he will lose his sight. Of course he does, the threat is realized, and he has to use trickery to cheat some other animal of its eyes in order to regain his vision.

But the myths also picture Trickster as a positive being, a transformer, if not a fully-fledged creator, who brings benefit to the world. Sometimes, these positive achievements happen by accident, as a side effect of some blunder or some trick. Many of the myths that purport to explain the growth of certain customs, or the invention of certain artefacts, have this element of Trickster's random and unintentional creation.

The world and man also receive benefit from one of the most universal acts of the trickster-transformer: the stealing of fire. Usually the trickster wheedles his way into the confidence of the powerful Fire People (or whatever the fire's supernatural guardians are called) and seizes the moment to take up a bit of fire and run. The guardians pursue, and often the fire is passed along a relay of other creatures until finally it is lodged in Wood or Tree. The Fire People cannot get it out, but the trickster teaches man how to get fire from wood (by rubbing two sticks together).

In most examples of the fire myth, and in other comparable tales, the Trickster has become a straightforward hero, whose good deeds are not the result of trickery or accident, but of his heroic devotion to the good and the right.

There are also tales in which Trickster is identified with the original creator-god, the Prime Mover and First Cause, who made the world and everything in it, like the Old Man of some Plains tribes, who sends the diver bird or some other creature to the bed of the primal sea for a bit of soil from which to mould the earth. The Blackfoot Old Man, seen at one point losing his sight in the eye-juggling idiocy mentioned before, is in the same cycle of tales seen sculpting the shapes of men and beasts and infusing life into them. So Trickster-Transformer is identified by the Indians as encompassing simultaneously a blockhead, an amoral practical joker, a hero who aids mankind and changes the world, and a god who creates mankind and the world.

Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby

The North American Indians have no monopoly on the trickster figure. He is found in myths and folktales throughout the world, for example in the jackal and hare of Indian folktales. In most of Africa Hare is the trickster, though Tortoise is prominent in some places. But West Africa has its own trickster, the spider Anansi. Anansi is a high-powered trickster who rarely appears as a dolt or fool; and he is seldom seen as a creator god, but he does perform his share of heroic and 'transforming' acts. He was taken to the Americas by the West African slaves, and now has a starring role in Caribbean traditional folktales, under a variety of names, including 'Aunt Nancy'.

Legba, a trickster figure of Dahomey, made his way also to the Caribbean and is now an important *loa* of Voodoo religion (see VOODOO). He acts as an intermediary, appearing first at a ceremony to open the way for people to be later possessed by other loa. The Hare trickster of southern Africa is thought to have made his way to the New World, to be reincarnated in southern Negro folktales as 'Brer Rabbit', though the Indian tribes of the south-eastern United States also have a notable Hare trickster who resembles Brer Rabbit.

Brer Rabbit appears in the folktales retold in a stage-Negro dialect by 'Uncle Remus', the journalist and folklorist Joel Chandler Harris. Like Anansi, the Rabbit is rarely seen to be a fool, though now and again he slips up. Every American child knows the story of the Tar Baby – a sticky figurine made by Brer Fox, which holds Brer Rabbit fast when he assaults it. Not every American child or adult knows that the motif of the 'stick-fast' trap recurs in Trickster cycles round the world. But not all of them get away from the trap so neatly as Brer Rabbit, who tricks the fox into flinging him into the briar patch, where he will be safe.

Trickster figures also exist in more sophisticated mythologies of the past, Monkey in China, for example, a supernatural being who defeats by magic and trickery various monsters and demons, and then forces the high gods to recognize and respect his power. Yet he remains a monkey, constantly getting into trivial and comic scrapes. Eventually his defiance of the gods is crushed by Buddha and he is imprisoned, but is later released (no less bumptious than before) to aid a noble traveller on a heroic quest.

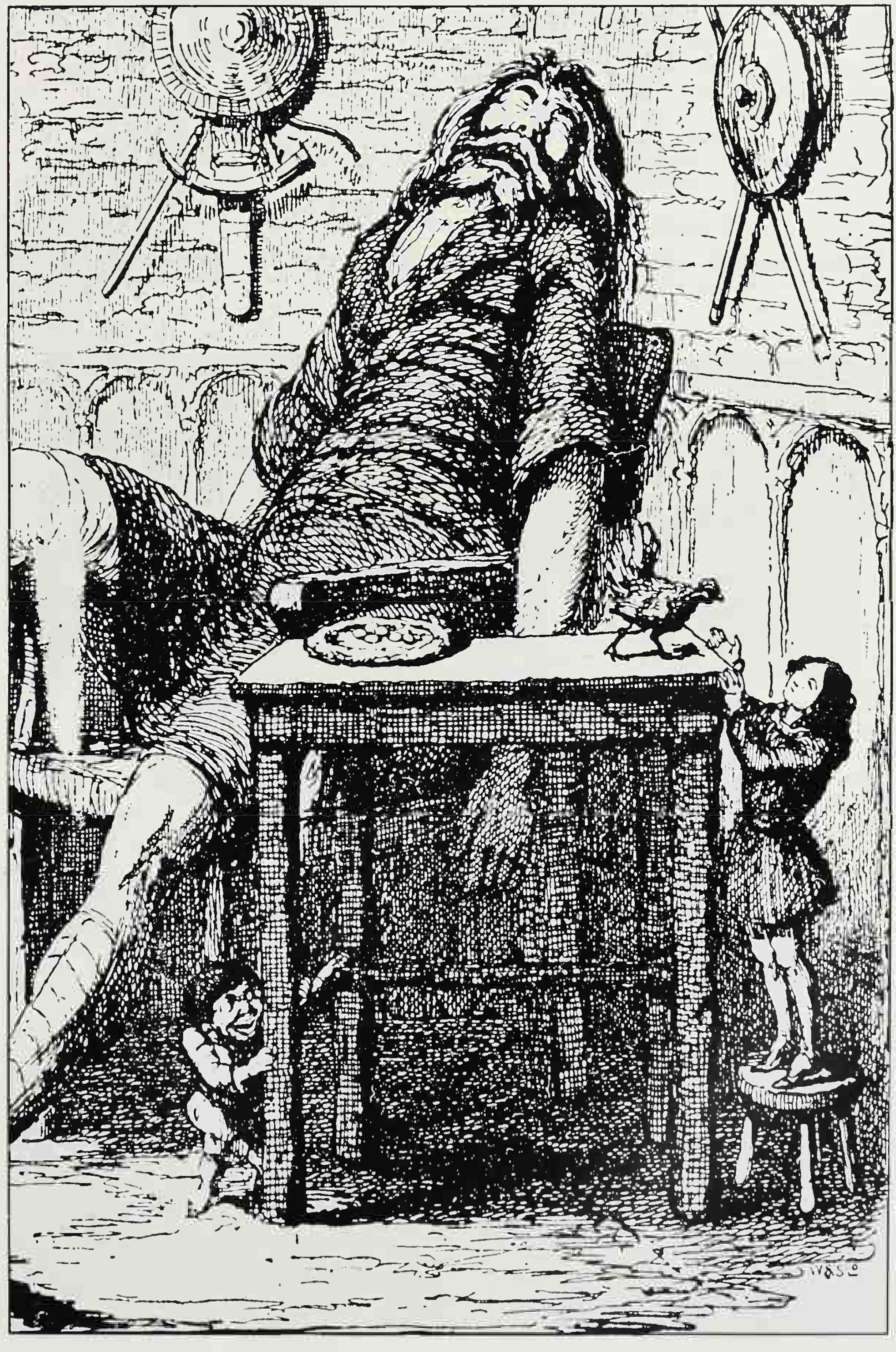
Trickster and Devil

Upon his release, the Monkey story shades from the trickster theme into that of the 'clever animal' who aids the hero in his hour of need. Even in his trickster aspects Monkey is a long way from the more primitive Coyote or Anansi. Even farther are the Greek god Hermes (see HERMES), who has been classed as a trickster because of the mischief he plays as a child, and the hero Prometheus, classified as a trickster because of the fire-stealing myth (see PROMETHEUS). But many primitive tricksters have something in common with Hermes. Most North American tricksters have myths in which they are killed and yet revive themselves effortlessly (often by tricking the powers of death into freeing them). Hermes, too, as psychopomp – guide of souls to the realm of death – moves freely into that realm and out again. And, oddly, the Dahomean Legba is an intermediary between gods and men just as is Hermes (the messenger of Zeus).

The mythology of the Teutonic and Norse peoples provides another parallel in the figure of Loki. One of the Aesir (as Hermes was one of the Olympians), Loki appears in many tales as a mischievous but not demonic trickster. But in other myths he is an embodiment of amorality and evil, the killer (by a trick) of Balder, the father of the Fenris wolf and the Midgard serpent, the ultimate author of world-ending Ragnarok (see LOKI; SCANDINAVIA).

Here the trickster figure overlaps with the figure of the Devil or comparable personification of evil. Another example is the apparent mingling in early Christian times of the classical god Pan, lord of all that is instinctual and animal (see PAN), and the horned, split-hooved Satan. Pan has much in common with the animalistic, amoral tricksters, who are identified by many primitives with powerful demons. And it is often the trickster who introduces pain and death into an Eden-like, paradisal world. The Navaho explicitly ally their Coyote with forces of outright evil, and also say that the sight of a real coyote at the start of some enterprise is a frightful omen.

Other tales of Trickster refer to him as someone who has been a high god, but who has fallen or been cast down from those heights. A comparable theme is the trickster's background as the prodigal and reprehensible son or brother of a high god, as Raven is in many north Pacific tales, as Loki is sometimes said to be the brother of Odin, as Legba is the youngest son of the Dahomey creator. The myth is not being strained when we link it with the fall of Lucifer and other aspects of the Christian Devil. Indeed, as Joseph Campbell points out, many primitive tribes after being

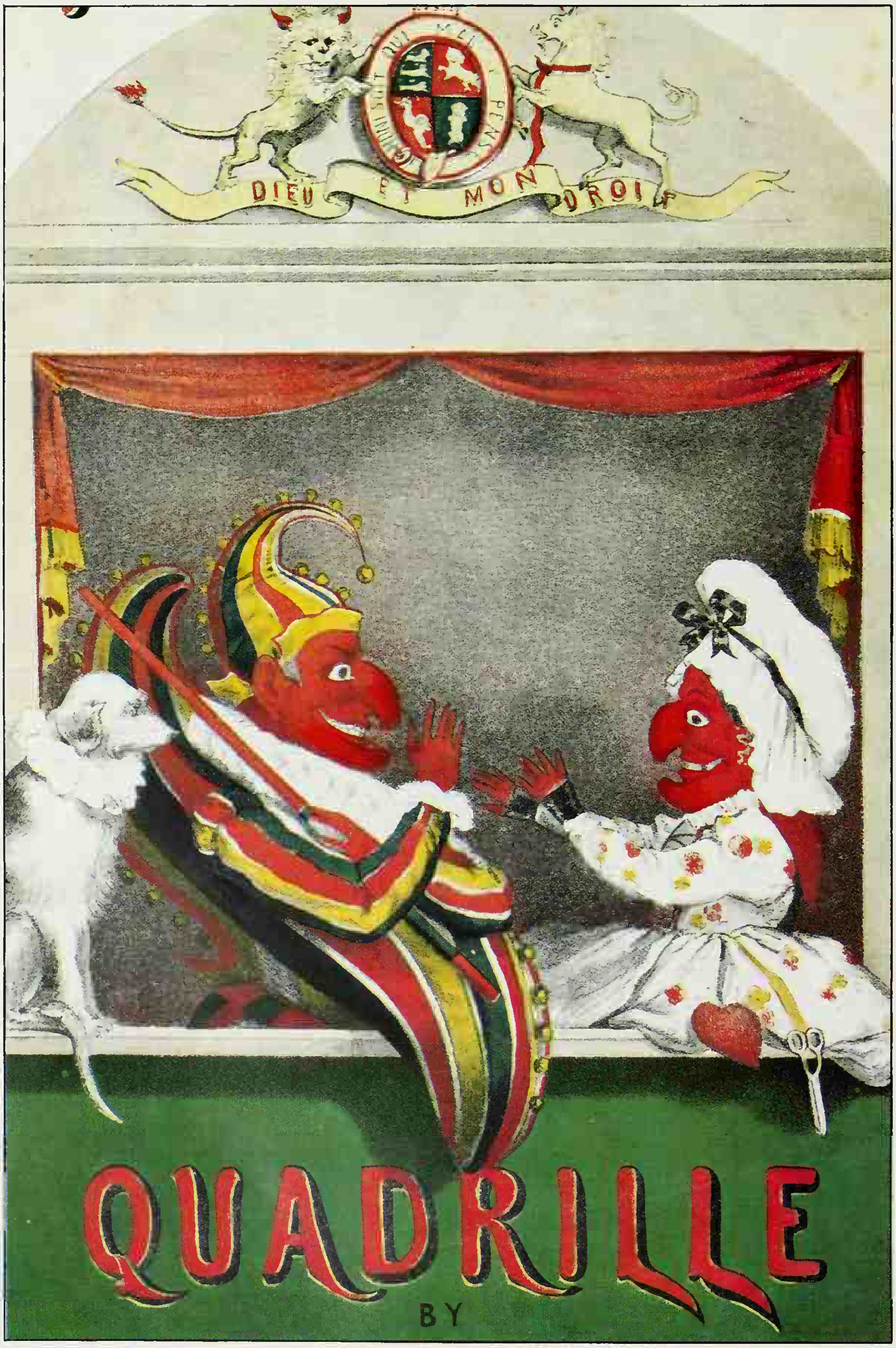


Facing page **Brer Rabbit has again outwitted his enemy Brer Fox in this illustration to the 'Uncle Remus' stories: the African trickster Hare is thought to have influenced the figure of Brer Rabbit, though Indian peoples of the eastern United States also have a notable Hare trickster** *Right* **The fairy tale hero Jack is another trickster figure**

Victoria and Albert Museum

Christianized adopted the figure of Satan as a trickster, and imposed onto him many of the usual themes from trickster cycles, including in some instances giving him a hand in creating the earth.

There is another interesting parallel in the ancient but still extant tradition of the fool, harlequin, Lord of Misrule or the like, who cavorts and plays rude pranks during the great pre-Lent carnivals. Here is Trickster in his flouting of authority, taboo-shattering mode; and many of these European fools appear, interestingly, in animal guise (see FOOL; SPRING).



Punch, abbreviated from Punchinello, a character in 17th century Italian comedy, is a bully and clown with hooked nose and humped back who kills his wife and baby, and outwits the law: from the Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection

Mander & Mitchenson

The Middle Ages also spawned trickster characters outside the conventions of Carnival, like Till Eulenspiegel, hero of comic German tales on the theme of a crafty peasant outwitting pompous city folk who underestimate him. Still older were the fables that came together in the French *roman* of Reynard the Fox, a classical trickster.

Farther afield, some writers have seen traces of Trickster in what Ali Baba does to the thieves, but there is more to be found in the ancient, hilarious but meaningful Sufi tales of Mulla Nasredin, recently reintroduced to the West by Idries Shah. The Mulla is in the Eulenspiegel tradition of the 'cunning fool'; foolery masks his ability to puncture self-importance, show up prejudice and undermine narrow minds. He is Trickster ignoring the rules, the proprieties, the rigid and sterile dogmas of minds that have stopped expanding.

In this century, folklorists see echoes of the blockhead trickster in widespread joke cycles about the 'Little Moron' and his ilk, and other echoes in similar jokes about cunning fools like the 'clever Yankee'. But perhaps the fullest recent flowering of the trickster figure was in the multi-faceted comedy of men like Charles Chaplin, in films like *The Pawnbroker* – where the hero is capable of great stupidity at times, but able always to rise to the occasion (if, sometimes, by accident) to thwart a bully, aid the distressed and leave a much benefited and 'transformed' world behind him.

Angel and Ape

How can one mythological character contain at the same time a benighted idiot, an amoral villain with a certain low cunning, and a culture hero or god to whom man owes most or all of his humanity? Most authorities see in these apparently irreconcilable elements a fusion (or confusion) of two age-old strands in primitive myth-making. Paul Radin's interpretation of the Winnebago myth structure seems to support this view, because the Winnebago have not made (or have unmade) the fusion. Their trickster is the animalistic blockhead with occasional flashes of animal cunning – and nothing more. He is not a culture hero. That role is filled by Hare, in a separate myth cycle, and by other even more heroic figures in their myth cycles: and where Hare retains some of the craftiness of a true trickster, these other heroes have evolved past that stage.

So the Winnebago appear to show us the two strands for what they are. Radin, looking at the animalistic trickster in the light of Jungian psychology, sees him as representing the early, dim stumblings of humanity from a state of 'undifferentiated' animalism towards a humanized state of self-awareness, with a firm grasp on identity and social values. He suggested that the archetypal hero myth passes through four stages, representing the human consciousness on its way to a full flowering. Trickster is stage one – full of blundering, of a single-minded urge to satisfy primal desires.

Trickster myths are usually of extreme antiquity and Radin calls Trickster 'the oldest of all figures in American Indian mythology, probably in all mythologies'. The true culture-hero activities and the less animalistic aspects of Trickster cycles can be seen as later additions to the original figure. It may be that increasingly sophisticated shamans and priests gradually altered the old tales over the generations, so that the original doltish, obscene Trickster changed and improved, and gained heroic, or even divine, stature.

No doubt this fusion of dullard and deity did not disturb the primitive sense of religious propriety, as it would disturb ours. American Indians themselves in our day have expressed puzzlement and distress at the contradictions in their trickster tales. But their ancestors – and ours, in pagan Europe – knew better. Their gods were humanized, and Trickster is the most human of all, a clear expression of man's true nature, angel and ape in one.

C. G. Jung believed that the human ego, the bright nucleus of the conscious mind, has in the unconscious an exact counterpart or reverse image, which he called the 'shadow'. It appears in dreams as a 'compensatory' figure, pointing up a lack of balance or harmony in the psyche. And the animalistic Trickster, Jung felt, is a mythological shadow figure, the reverse image of the saint or angel; he is the ape or mp or dark opposite, without which a balance, a psychic wholeness, could not be achieved.

The tales are a primary source of entertainment, whether we laugh at the doltish trickster blundering into trouble or the wily trickster outwitting others. They were also used as a means of moral instruction for the young. The Coyote stories of treachery, stupidity, cowardice and taboo-smashing were effective ways of communicating to Indian children the need to obey tribal laws and aspire to the high virtues of warriors. But besides instruction and entertainment, the stories have a primary purpose which recalls Jung's theory of the 'shadow'. The myths are cathartic. They provide an outlet for the tensions that inevitably build up in societies bound by ritual, taboo, hierarchical order and the requirements of a highly organized and demanding religion which permeates every fibre of the social structure.

Most tribal societies are so permeated, and have their tricksters. Prominent in the ceremonies of the Pueblo Indians, for example, are the holy fools, the *koyemshi*, daubed in mud and excrement, screeching obscenities, mocking the chants and songs, embodying and purging every individual's yearning to break free of his society's cumbersome demands. Other tribes had their variants of the koyemshi, and their trickster tales. Medieval Europeans found their cathartic release in the wild revelry of Carnival, led by a trickster figure. Perhaps we find ours in the films, watching the modern successors to Chaplin and Keaton.

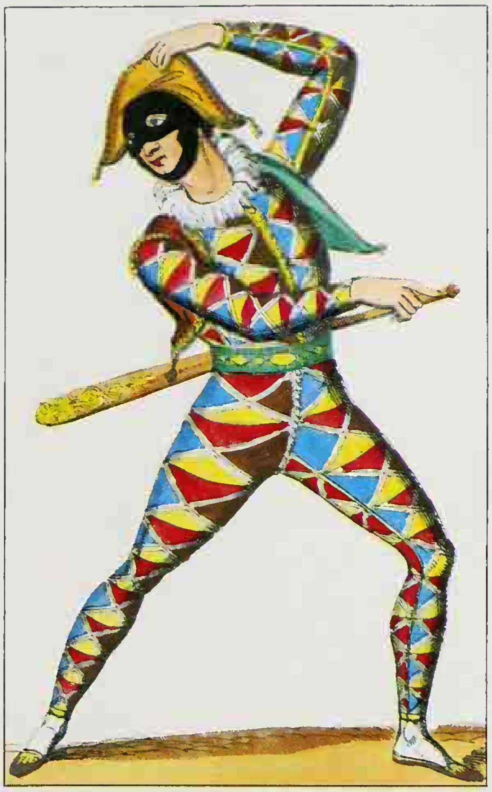
So it seems that the many roles of Trickster blend and fuse. Trickster is comic relief; he is psychic catharsis on a deep and vital level; he is a hero whose own evolution perhaps mirrors that of mankind towards a higher consciousness and social maturity. And, embodying all these essentials, he is deathless – no ethnological museum piece but alive and flourishing today as in the primeval past.

(See also GREAT PLAINS INDIANS; PACIFIC NORTH-WEST INDIANS; PUEBLO INDIANS.)

DOUGLAS HILL

FURTHER READING: J. Ferrante, *The Conflict of Love and Honor*, (Mouton, 1973); Paul Radin, *The Trickster* (Schocken, 1972); Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God* (Penguin, 1976).

Trickster survives in Europe and the Americas in the fool, harlequin or Lord of Misrule of the carnival season before Lent who cavorts about playing rude pranks, flouting established authority and convention: Harlequin, from the Mander and Mitchenson Theatre Collection



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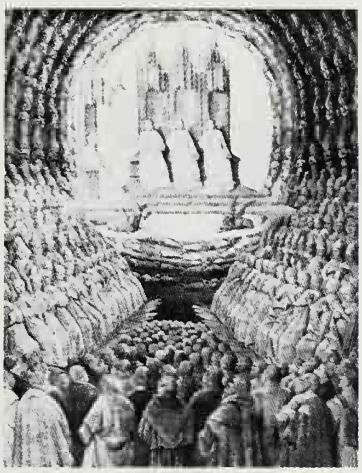


Trinity

A set of three forming a unity or closely connected: in Christianity, God is One and also Three (Father, Son and Holy Ghost): in Hinduism, Brahman is One and also Three: deities grouped in sets of three occur in pagan religions, especially among the Celts: numerologically, the number 3 is held to reveal a pair of opposites and the Unity which reconciles and transcends them.

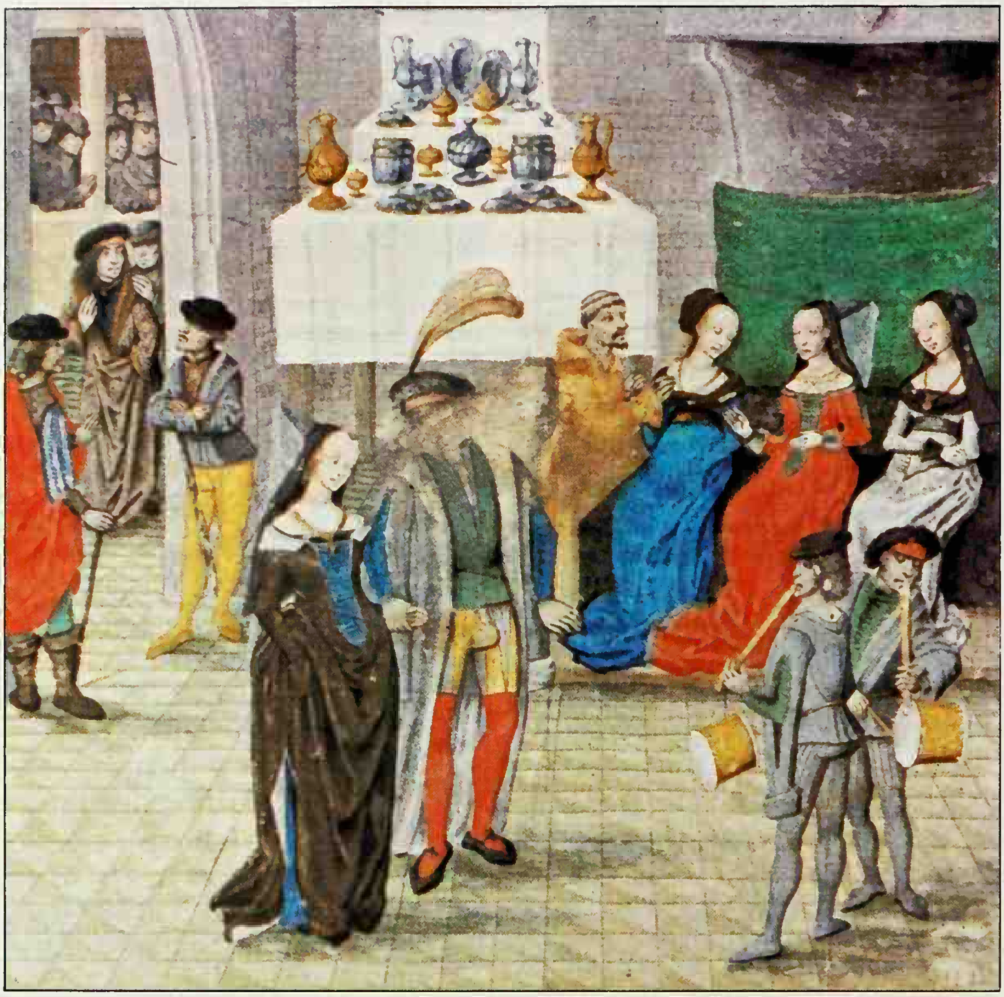
See BRAHMAN; CELTS; CHRISTIANITY; THREE.

TRISTAN

THE STORY of Tristan and Ysolt is one of the great love stories of all time. It is a tale of llicit passion, for Tristan is the nephew and favourite champion, and Ysolt the beloved wife, of Mark, the kindly but rresolute king of Cornwall, whom both regard with feelings of deep respect and affection. Like all the greatest love stories, t is about a pair in equal bondage to their passion rather than about a great lover wooing and winning the object of his desire. Tristan and Ysolt have gained the immortality of Romeo and Juliet, not that of Paris and Helen of Troy.

The Tristan legend is of great antiquity and during its long history from early Celtic tales through medieval Arthurian literature to Wagner, Tennyson and Thomas Mann the style of its presentation and interpretation has varied greatly. But the two finest of all the versions of the legend, though separated by over 600 years, share to a marked degree the same subtle psychological framework in which the story is set, though many details of the narrative are different. These are the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassburg, one of the masterpieces of early 13th century German poetry, and Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*. Both works profoundly analyse the mainsprings of the most powerful of human emotions and their tragic outcome in this particular version of the eternal triangle.

In both works, the first element of the passion of Tristan and Ysolt that gives it its archetypal quality is the equality of the lovers. It is moreover, a 'passion' in both senses of the word: no pair was ever more rapturously in love and because of that rapture, much suffering came to them and to others who were dear to them. It is this sorrow, willingly accepted on their own behalf but bitterly regretted when caused to others, that is the second of the main archetypal themes. Love, in one of its aspects, is inevitably a destroyer and lovers may despairingly watch their own actions, which they are powerless to control, damage or ruin the well-being of good people with whom they have enjoyed relations of trust and affection. At the same



Bodleian Library Filmstrip

The legend of Tristan and Ysolt has a long history from its beginning in Celtic tales through Arthurian romances to treatments by Wagner, Tennyson and Thomas Mann *Right* A tournament scene from *Roman de Tristan*, French, 15th century *Left* Tristan arrives at a castle below the sea: from a Flemish MS, c 1500

time, at least in the eyes of the world, the lovers are destroying themselves and their position in it. The good hurt the good; the innocents, almost, are massacred without the need of a butcher. Yet the lovers, caught in a web of deceit and circumstance, trying, in their more lucid moments, to balance an impossible account of lust, worldly honour and human decency, may themselves sometimes be brought to attempt vile deeds. They will later suffer remorse or be shamed by the generous forgiveness or loyalty of their intended victim.

The third archetypal strand also relates to the helplessness of the lovers. Tristan and Ysolt fall in love, at least in the simple terms of narrative, not as they might in a modern novel but because they unwittingly drink a love potion. How far the swallowing of this fatal draught absolves them of their moral responsibilities, of which they remain painfully aware, is uncertain. But it does symbolize love as an exterior force, an elemental power that strikes at mortal men and women and drives them 'mad'. The more powerfully are such mortals struck, the more total does their love become as the intensity of their spiritual union matches the pitch of their physical passion and, thereby, the further removed they become from choice, guilt or blame. Indeed, in extreme cases, like that of Tristan and Ysolt, an 'illegitimate' love acquires a sanctity that is recognized and revered even, and indeed especially, by those whom it has harmed. Such are the main themes against which both Gottfried and Wagner set their versions of the story of Tristan and Ysolt. The summary of the legend which follows is close to that of Gottfried's narrative.

The Splinter in the Bone

Tristan was the son of Blancheflor, sister of Mark, king of Cornwall, and Rivalin, the lord of a part of Brittany. Rivalin was killed in battle before Tristan's birth and Blancheflor died in childbed. Brought up by his father's loyal marshal, Tristan grew to be strong and handsome, skilled in hunting, literature and music. Stranded by misadventure in Cornwall, he made a favourable impression at Mark's court, and was recognized as the king's nephew and knighted.

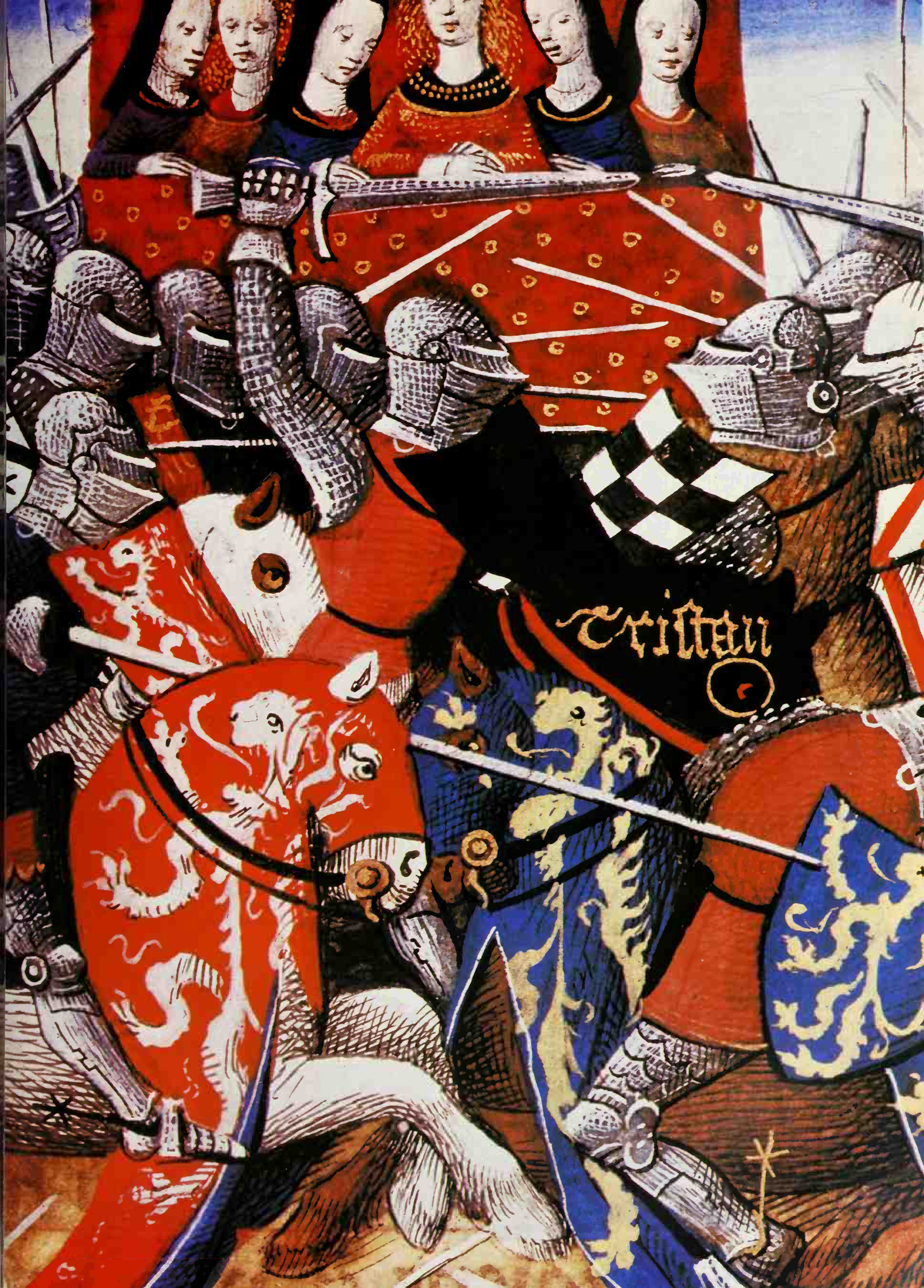
At that time one of the great sorrows of Cornwall was the tribute exacted by the Irish. Every year Morold, champion of the king of Ireland, would appear and demand the handing over of a party of noble youths for service in Ireland. So fearsome was he, no Cornish knight dared oppose him, but Tristan challenged him to combat. After a long and savage duel, Tristan slew Morold by cleaving his skull, a splinter of his sword remaining in the bone when the body was taken back to Ireland. But Morold had wounded Tristan with a poisoned spear: the wound would not heal and his life was feared for. It was known that the only person skilled enough to cure him was, of all people, Morold's sister Ysolt, the queen of Ireland. Tristan therefore made a typically bold plan. He sailed to Ireland and, off Dublin, his friends set him adrift alone in a small boat disguised as a minstrel named Tantris. The locals pitied him and took him to court, where the queen did indeed cure his wound. Tantris became a great favourite and was engaged as tutor in literature and music to the young princess, also called Ysolt.

When he finally returned to Cornwall, some of the courtiers began to be jealous of this young paragon who was the king's heir. They persuaded Mark that he should marry and have sons; and who better for bride than the young Ysolt, whom Tristan had praised so vividly for her beauty and intelligence and whose hand would bring peace between the two nations? Mark agreed and Tristan was sent to put the proposal.

Tristan landed in Ireland and found the country ravaged by a dragon so terrible that the king had promised his daughter in marriage to any knight who slew it. Tristan killed it and cut off a large piece of its tongue which he kept under his shirt. Now the king's steward (a cowardly man who was the princess's unwelcome suitor) happened to be riding past and could not believe his luck when he saw the reptile dead and nobody about – for Tristan, sorely wounded and overcome by the foul fumes exhaled by the monster, had fainted in a nearby wood. The steward lopped off the dragon's head and hurried to court to claim Ysolt's hand, to the dismay of the princess. But her wily mother knew the steward was incapable of this heroic deed. She and her daughter, accompanied by her niece Brangane, searched in the neighbourhood and found a stricken man whom to their astonishment they recognized as 'Tantris'. Under the queen's care, Tristan speedily recovered. But the young Ysolt noticed to her horror that a nick in the blade of his magnificent sword exactly matched the splinter she had taken from the skull of her beloved uncle Morold, whom she had sworn to avenge.

In a scene of high comedy, as Tristan sits helpless in his bath, Ysolt rails at him and tries to kill him with his own sword. Her mother, to whom Tristan confesses all and discloses the object of his present mission, calms her down and declares that bygones should be bygones – and that if the truth is not brought out before the king, Ysolt will have to marry the hateful steward. The princess agrees but remains implacable in her hostility to Tristan. When, at court, the steward is humiliated by Tristan producing the dragon's tongue, the king agrees to the alliance. Tristan sets sail for Cornwall with Ysolt, Brangane and all the youths who had been taken in tribute.

Now begins the passion. During the voyage, Tristan and Ysolt, still barely on speaking terms, call for a drink. By a fatal error, a lady-in-waiting gives them the flask containing a love potion brewed by the queen for Ysolt to give to Mark. It has an immediate and catastrophic effect, and by the


tristan

time they make port Tristan and Ysolt have consummated their love. Terrified, Ysolt persuades her virgin cousin Brangane to lie in the dark with her husband the king at the beginning of the wedding night. The stratagem is successful: Ysolt comes to bed before wine and lights are brought. Later, she orders Brangane to be secretly murdered, lest the truth come out. But her assassins have not the heart to kill the girl who protests her innocence so eloquently. Ysolt and Brangane are reconciled.

Tristan and Ysolt then begin a long period of hidden tortured love. Rumours begin to go about of an attachment between them, and Mark is tormented by doubt and indecision, above all by the horrible possibility that the gossip might be true. Various traps are laid for the lovers but although there is a mass of circumstantial evidence there is no proof. Finally it is agreed that Ysolt should submit to the ordeal: if she swears her innocence as she grasps a red-hot iron she will not be burned. In this passage, one of the most remarkable episodes, Tristan disguises himself as a ragged pilgrim in the watching crowd. Ysolt arrives in a boat at the appointed place and Tristan carries her ashore. He slips 'so that his fall brought him to rest lying in the Queen's lap and arms'. Thus Ysolt can swear that no man has lain with her save Mark and the pilgrim – and the iron did not burn her.

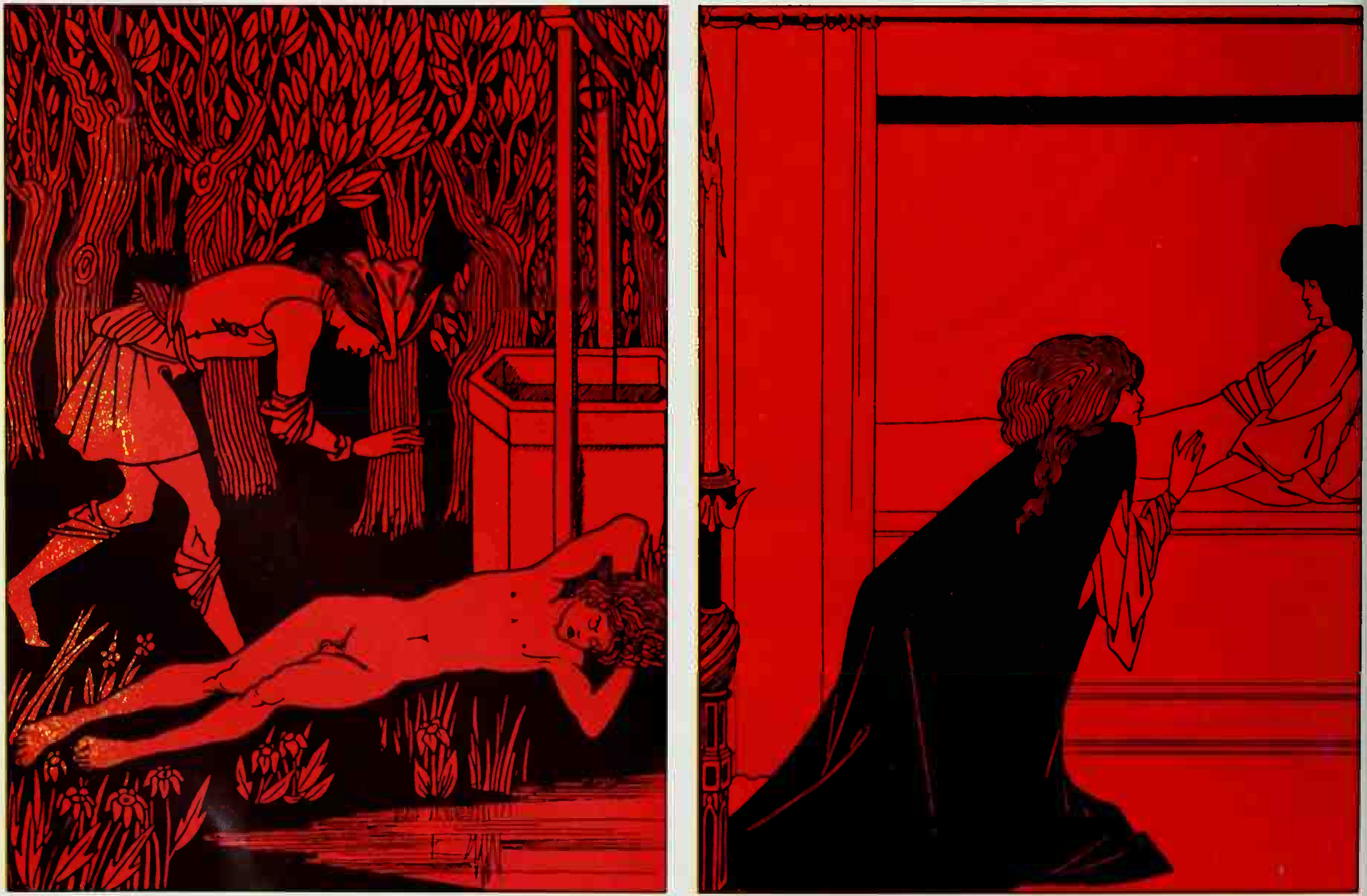
Mark's doubts are laid to rest; but only for a little while. The talk goes on and, indeed, it is now obvious, even to Mark, that Tristan and Ysolt love each other. At last the desolate king admits this to himself. He summons the pair before the court and in a speech of great nobility and generosity he tells them that he loves them both too much to harm them. They must leave and go their own way. Then follows the most extraordinary part of Gottfried's poem. Tristan and Ysolt, accompanied only by Tristan's faithful retainer Curvenal and his hunting dog Hiudan, repair to the wilds to live in the 'Cave of Lovers'. Here they dwell in a gentle rapture in which the desires of body and spirit fuse in a mystical union. The lovers' condition, and the cave and its furnishings, are described in language which overtly uses the vocabulary of the Christian mysticism of the period.

In the Cave of Lovers

Some people are smitten with curiosity and astonishment, and plague themselves with the question how these two companions, Tristan and Isolde, nourished themselves in this wasteland? I will tell them and assuage their curiosity. They looked at one another and nourished themselves with that! Their sustenance was the eye's increase. They fed in their grotto on nothing but love and desire. The two lovers who formed its court had small concern for their provender. Hidden away in their hearts they carried the best nutriment to be had anywhere in the world, which offered itself unasked ever fresh and new. I mean pure devotion, love made sweet as balm that consoles body and sense so tenderly, and sustains the heart and spirit – this was their best nourishment. Truly, they never considered any food but that from which the heart drew desire, the eyes delight, and which the body, too, found agreeable. With this they had enough. Love drove her ancient plough for them, keeping pace all the time, and gave them an abundant store of all those things that go to make heaven on earth.

Gottfried von Strassburg *Tristan*
(trans A. T. Hatto)

Meanwhile, Mark is mourning their absence. Out hunting one day, he happens on the cave and through a window sees the pair asleep on the bed but between them Tristan's great sword – a symbol of chastity. The wretched king summons them back to court but is still suspicious, and one day actually finds them asleep in a garden, close and naked in each other's arms. As he rushes off to fetch witnesses (as the law required), Tristan awakes and sees him. Tristan rouses Ysolt. It is the end: they will both be killed if the witnesses see them and now they can never be happy together. 'Keep me in your heart; for whatever happens to mine, you shall never leave it.' Ysolt gives him a ring as a token of their love and to use to confirm any message he might ever have to send. She passionately bids him an agonized farewell.



King Mark and Tristan, and Ysolt nursing Tristan, by Aubrey Beardsley: an essential element in the love-story of Tristan and Ysolt is the suffering which their passion inflicts on those who are dear to them, especially King Mark, who is Ysolt's husband

Tristan tries to forget his sorrows in varfare, in Spain, in Germany, back in his iomeland. He allies himself with a lord iamed Kaedin who has a sister, also called Ysolt – Ysolt of the White Hands. Tristan nds himself attracted to her, but he cannot nderstand his own feelings: is he trying to orget his true Ysolt by allowing (or even irging) himself to fall in love with another; s he drawn to Ysolt of the White Hands because she seems, by her very name, like a lream of Ysolt of Ireland? (Around this point Gottfried's poem breaks off and the tory is continued in a fragment of the *Tristran* of Thomas 'of Britain', whom ottfried admired and had used as one of is chief sources.) Finally Tristan commits he culpable folly of marrying this other Ysolt – and finds himself incapable of consummating the marriage.

Eventually, in a battle, as so many years before, Tristan is wounded by a poisoned spear and the wound will not heal. He suffers atrociously and knows that only Ysolt who learned her mother's skills can cure him. He sends Kaedin with the ring, to beg Ysolt to come. Overheard by Ysolt of the White Hands, Tristan asks that the ship, when it returns, should carry a white sail if Ysolt is on board and a black if she is not. Kaedin sets out, finds Ysolt and has little trouble in persuading her to come.

At last the ship comes into view and Tristan, rousing himself on his bed, asks his wife the colour of its sail. 'Black,' she replies. 'At this,' in the words of Thomas, 'Tristan feels such pain that he has never had greater nor ever will, and he turns his face to the wall and says: "God save Ysolt and me! Since you will not come to me I must die for your love. I can hold on to life no longer. I die for you, Ysolt, dear love!" Ysolt lands, and hearing of Tristan's death cries that she will die for him in return. She lies beside him, kisses him and dies. There, in Thomas, the story ends, in the love-death, the same *Liebestod* that brings Wagner's opera to its tragic end.

C. DE HOGHTON

FURTHER READING: Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* and Beroul's *Romance of Tristan* are available in the Penguin Classics series.

TROLL

THIS elemental spirit of northern European mythology belongs to that supernatural airy community which was once assumed to xercise dominion over Nature, a class of pirit regarded with considerable apprehension since all elementals were known to be capricious, treacherous and frequently hostile. Elementals were in the main ssociated with particular sites, in the case of trolls mountain caverns from which they merged after nightfall. Broadly speaking, here were two classes of trolls: the giant nd the dwarf, both of which were reported o steal women, exchange human children or their own hideous offspring and indulge n a good deal of petty theft. It has been generally assumed that all trolls were originally of giant stature but that, specially in areas like Denmark and Finland, they became gradually reduced in ize. Giant trolls, however, abounded in mountainous countries like Norway and Sweden, where they were the spirits of the mountains, and were in the main dull-witted, hairy cannibals with huge noses for smelling out the blood of their human prey. An allied species, the trow, haunted the Orkneys and Shetlands, frequenting both and and sea.

The dwarf trolls in their own particular way were quite as hideous as their giant ounterparts and were recognizable by their humped backs and red caps. They were good mechanics and clever dancers, and they possessed beautiful wives but, unlike the iants, they seem to have been extremely harp-witted although their cunning was of a ow order. One species at least must have een extremely small, hence the words of an ld Danish ballad: 'Out then spoke the tiny troll, no bigger than an emmet'.

Scandinavian folklore contains a great deal of interesting information about the habits and idiosyncrasies of the troll population. All trolls hated noise, an aversion they acquired in the days of old when the Teutonic god Thor dedicated much of his time to hurling his hammer in their direction. Their instinctive hostility to the Christian aith led to an intense loathing of church ells, the sound of which could reduce the most powerful troll to a heap of pebbles. As creatures of darkness, trolls were terrified of sunlight, which could petrify them.

Giant trolls were frequently credited with building mighty structures like castles, bridges and churches, and legends abound describing how they were cheated of their wages (usually human souls) by their sharper-witted clients. At the root of this tradition lay the belief that some kind of payment was due to the owner of the soil when land was set aside for building or cultivation, the landlord, in this case, being an earth elemental demanding his rent in blood or souls.

Anyone who managed to learn a troll's name had the power to destroy him by repeating it. There is a famous Norse legend about a troll named Wind and Weather, who contracted to build a church in return for which he was to receive as wages the sun and moon. Alas, his client, the saintly King Olaf, discovered his name by accident, and cried out: 'Hold, O Wind and Weather, you've set the spire askew', and the troll crashed to the ground, being reduced to a large heap of flints.

Figure of a troll, from Sweden: the lore of these nightmare creatures of past belief has been revived in the interests of the tourist trade, though trolls are no longer credited with eating human flesh

Philip Rahtz

Despite the useful work performed by church-building trolls a pronounced antipathy existed between mankind and trolls in general, due largely to the trolls' deplorable habit of stealing babies and seducing wives. Trolls could be kept at bay, however, by attaching sprigs of mistletoe to crib and byre and bedroom ceiling, and by lighting huge bonfires known as Baldur's Bale Fires at crossroads on St John's Eve, using nine varieties of wood, and at the same time hurling toadstools into the flames. In Sweden fires were lit at Eastertide, the peasants firing warning shots in all directions.

A rapid degradation in the status of the troll followed the advance of Christianity into northern Europe which had the effect of transforming all Teutonic elementals into what can only be described as Christianized devils. Among the 17th-century evil spirits referred to by Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* were 'Robin Goodfellows, trolls etc., which as they are most conversant with men do them the most harm'. Many of the basic characteristics of the troll are clearly discernible in the attributes of devils, the troll wife-stealer becoming in time the demon lover, the incubus seducing women in their sleep (see INCUBUS).

With the departure of devils from the modern mythological scene troll-lore has undergone an encouraging revival, largely in the interests of the Scandinavian tourist industry. Toy trolls, huge, long-nosed and hairy, often brandishing flint axes, are now available in Norwegian shops and the traveller is carefully reminded that trolls wearing their traditional red caps can occasionally be seen at night in the proximity of hills and mounds. Fortunately, modern trolls have developed more sophisticated appetites than their ancestors for, according to the last vagary of folklore, they no longer demand tribute in the form of souls but request heaped platefuls of bananas and cream.

ERIC MAPLE

TROUT

IN CELTIC regions of the British Isles the trout was long regarded as a 'fish of wisdom' and was credited with supernatural powers of a high order. Sacred trout were quite often found in holy wells, sometimes in the company of eels which were frequently assumed to have similar powers. In Wales, at the well of Ffynnon Beris in Caernarvonshire, there were two trout whose movements showed what fate held in store for those who consulted them by throwing bread into the water. If no fish put in an appearance, the omen was bad, but if they could clearly be seen swimming in the water, the auspices were favourable. The local people jealously guarded the fish, and a similar brace of trout in the well at Ffynnon Gwyfan, near Disserth Church, were also protected.

In Ireland, the trout of the well at Kilmorne were regarded as guardian spirits and were said never to vary in size over the centuries. There were two beautiful trout at Tober Kieran, one of which showed its supernatural qualities in a most startling manner. An irreverent soldier, wanting a fish for dinner, caught it with rod and line, but discovered to his astonishment that he had hooked a beautiful woman instead. Overwhelmed, he let her fall back into the water, where she again became a trout. The well at Tullaghan in County Sligo was tenanted by two miraculous trout, which were invisible to those without second sight.

In the Crammag River in the Isle of Man there is a pool which has a reputation for bringing misfortune to those who fish there. It is said that long ago an angler tried to catch trout there, but fainted on seeing a host of tiny fairy creatures clothed in red, which rose from the pool and then vanished.

Trout fishermen, like other anglers, have their own lore and superstitions. The saying, 'You must lose a fly to catch a trout', has a hint of a sacrifice required in return for the acquisition of so uncanny a fish. Some fishermen spit on the bait before casting the line, and some will never change rods after catching their first catch. The first of the catch is sometimes returned to the water 'for luck'. The cry of the cuckoo, first thing in the morning means no luck in fishing that day.

According to Homer, the Greek princess Helen, the loveliest of mortal women, was seduced and abducted to Troy by Paris, the son of King Priam: to recover her, the Greeks besieged Troy for ten years and took it in the tenth. Though formerly dismissed as fiction, it is now clear that the story of the siege was based on fact

TROY

THE PRINCIPAL sources of our knowledge about Troy are twofold and complementary; the Homeric epics, and archeological investigation in modern times. It is as a result of archeological investigation that there is now general acceptance of the view that there is a historical reality behind Homer; and that the tale of a ten-year siege of the city by an expedition under the command of the Achaean overlord Agamemnon from mainland Greece had a real basis. In addition, as the result of recent researches into the techniques of orally transmitted poetry, there is also wide acceptance of the theory that, no matter what the precise date may have been when the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were first written down in their present form, the sagas about the Trojan War and its aftermath could have been commemorated by bards soon after the actual events. These early sagas would then have formed the basis of the epic tradition, which was refined and enlarged by succeeding generations of poets depending upon memory and improvisation. It seems likely that the Trojans and Achaeans not only had the same kind of material culture but were perhaps of similar 'Indo-European' extraction.

The name of Homer is primarily associated with the two great epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Each of them is independent but their common background is the Trojan War. The central feature of the *Iliad* is the 'Wrath of Achilles', or the quarrel between Achilles and his overlord, Agamemnon (see ACHILLES). As a result of this quarrel, Achilles refused to continue fighting and the Greeks are pressed back. Then Achilles takes up arms again and kills Hector, the Trojan prince. The *Iliad* ends with Hector's funeral.

The *Odyssey* contains much about the Trojan War too, but it starts at a point in the tenth year after the war ended. There is a council of the Olympian gods, at which it is decided that Odysseus, who has been wandering about as a result of the anger directed against him by the sea god Poseidon, should be brought home to his kingdom of Ithaca. The nucleus is a cunning man's voyage overseas among miracles and monsters, his revenge on his enemies who took advantage of his absence, the faithful wife at home, the young son growing to maturity in the absence of his father. Though the adventures extend over ten years, all but the last are concentrated in a single section. As in the *Iliad*, a large subject is embraced in one view by focusing on a single portion.

The Towers of Ilion

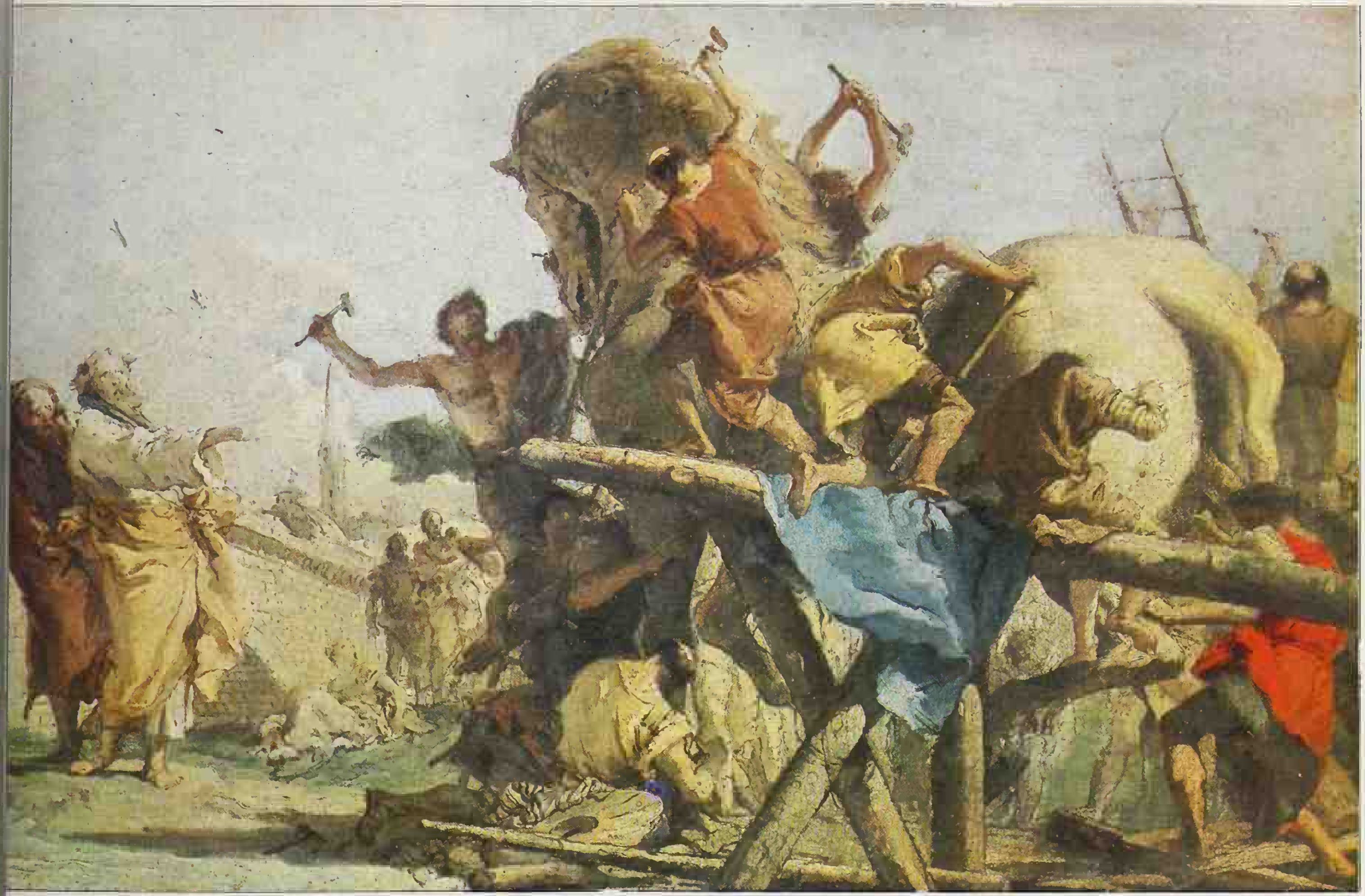
Epic poetry is simply recitation; and Greek epic is written in hexameters, a single verse constantly repeated, saved from monotony by the device of a shifting caesura or 'pause' in the line. One of the features of epic diction is the use of stock phrases, many of them very old. They frequently consist of a half-verse preceding or following the caesura. The formality of these set verses, used repeatedly and without variation whenever the subject requires them, stamps them as archaic. The roots of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* lie far back in the Mycenean Age, though the poems as a whole appear to have taken shape in Asia Minor during the 10th and 9th centuries BC; and they were still expanding in the 7th.

Homeric archeology is a comparative study. Its object is to interpret the poems in the light of the excavated remains, and the remains in the light of the poems. There are elements in the poems – descriptions of material objects and social usages – which have accordingly been dated to definite periods, early or late, from the 15th to the 7th centuries BC.

From a reading of Homer we gather that Troy was an extensive city, defended by mighty walls and towers and it is called either Troy (*Troie*) or Ilios (later to be Ilion), both conventionally described as 'well-walled', but each having more distinctive epithets. Troy is a 'broad city', 'a great city', 'the city of the Trojans', with 'deep rich soil'; it is the 'city of Priam', having 'lofty gates' and 'fine towers'; and Ilios is 'well-built', 'very windy' but 'a comfortable place to live'; it is also 'steep', 'sheer' and 'frowning', as well as 'holy' and 'sacred'; since it was the city of the Trojans ('those tamers of horses') it not surprisingly has 'fine foals'. It has been conjectured that the city of which Homer gives us these revealing glimpses could have sheltered as many as 50,000 people. A great city indeed must have been required for the indigenous people and the many allies of the Trojans with their horses and war-gear.

There was an open *agora* (place of assembly) in the upper part of the citadel outside the palace of King Priam. This magnificent place 'was fronted with marble colonnades, and in the main building behind there were 50 apartments of polished stone, adjoining each other, where Priam's sons slept with their wives. His daughters had separate quarters, on the other side of the courtyard, where 12 adjoining bedrooms had been built for them, of polished stone and well roofed in. Priam's sons-in-law slept with their loving wives in these.' Nearby were other palatial residences, including those of Hector and Paris, the latter built by Paris himself with the aid of the best workmen to be found in the land of Troy.

There were temples of Apollo and of Athene. The latter seems to have had a seated image of the goddess, for Hector (*Iliad*, book 6) bids his mother Hecuba to take a robe, the loveliest and biggest she can find, the one she most prizes herself, and lay it on the knees of the goddess. She is to promise to sacrifice a dozen yearling heifers, if only Athene will take pity on the town, on the wives and children of the Trojans. Homer then describes how Hecuba went into the palace and ordered her attendant ladies to gather the old women together from all parts of the city. Then she entered her bedchamber, where she stored her embroidered robes, woven by the women of Sidon whom Paris had brought back with him on the voyage on which he had fetched Helen. One of these robes, the largest and most richly adorned, lying at the bottom of the pile like a cluster of brilliant stars, she picked out as the gift for Athene. The old women thronged after her to the shrine in the citadel, and the door was opened to them by Theano, daughter of Kisseus and wife of Antenor, whom the Trojans had



J. R. Freeman

chosen to be priestess. They lifted their hands to Athene, and Theano took the robe and laid it upon the lap of the goddess.

Was this magnificent city, doomed to destruction at the hands of the besieging Greek forces, conjured out of poetic imagination? Did the Trojan War really take place? The search for the site, the work of excavation, the correlation of material objects with Homeric description – all this has led to impressive archeological discoveries in the past hundred years, making impossible that kind of scholarly scepticism which once dismissed the age of the Greek heroes as entirely fictitious. We have now been able to discern a basis of hard fact in many cases, though inconsistency, exaggeration and imaginative adornment must always be taken into account as possibly operative factors.

There is general agreement that no other city in the Troad (the north-west promontory of Asia Minor) except Hissarlik has any good claim to be the site of Troy. It also seems clear that the settlement known as Troy VI was severely damaged by an earthquake at the beginning of the 13th century BC, and was succeeded by the settlement known as Troy VII(a), which had real continuity with Troy VI. Troy VII(a) was destroyed by fire about half a century later, apparently through human agency. It is therefore Troy VII(a) which has strong claims to be regarded as the Homeric Troy.

From the fourth century BC onwards, Greek historians reckoned years in Olympiads, from 776 BC (see GAMES; ZEUS), though local events continued to be dated by the names of annual magistrates and calculations for earlier times were based on the traditional genealogies. It is the Parian Marble, a long inscription of the 3rd century BC, which embodies the first attempt to work out a comprehensive chronology. Some time afterwards another effort was made by the Alexandrine scholar Eratosthenes, whose *Chronographicae* in nine books (known to us in fragments) started with the capture of Troy, dated to 1184 BC, as compared with 1209 BC. Other historians and chronographers gave different dates and their conjectures ranged over a period of two centuries. A destruction date for Homeric Troy around the middle of the 13th century BC, would roughly agree with that given by the historian Herodotus.

'The archaeological Troy,' wrote Carl Blegen, 'the Troy that was built by masons, carpenters and labourers, of rough stones or squared building blocks, and crude bricks made with straw, of wooden timbers and beams, of clay and probably thatch for the roofing – that Troy, in its ruined state today, differs greatly, so far as its appearance is concerned, from the glamorous citadel pictured in the epic poems. But – if one is blessed with a little imagination – when one stands on the ancient hill top in the extreme north-western corner of Asia Minor and looks out over the Trojan plain and thinks of some of the many exciting scenes it has witnessed, one cannot escape feeling that this Troy, too, has a powerful touch of enchantment.'

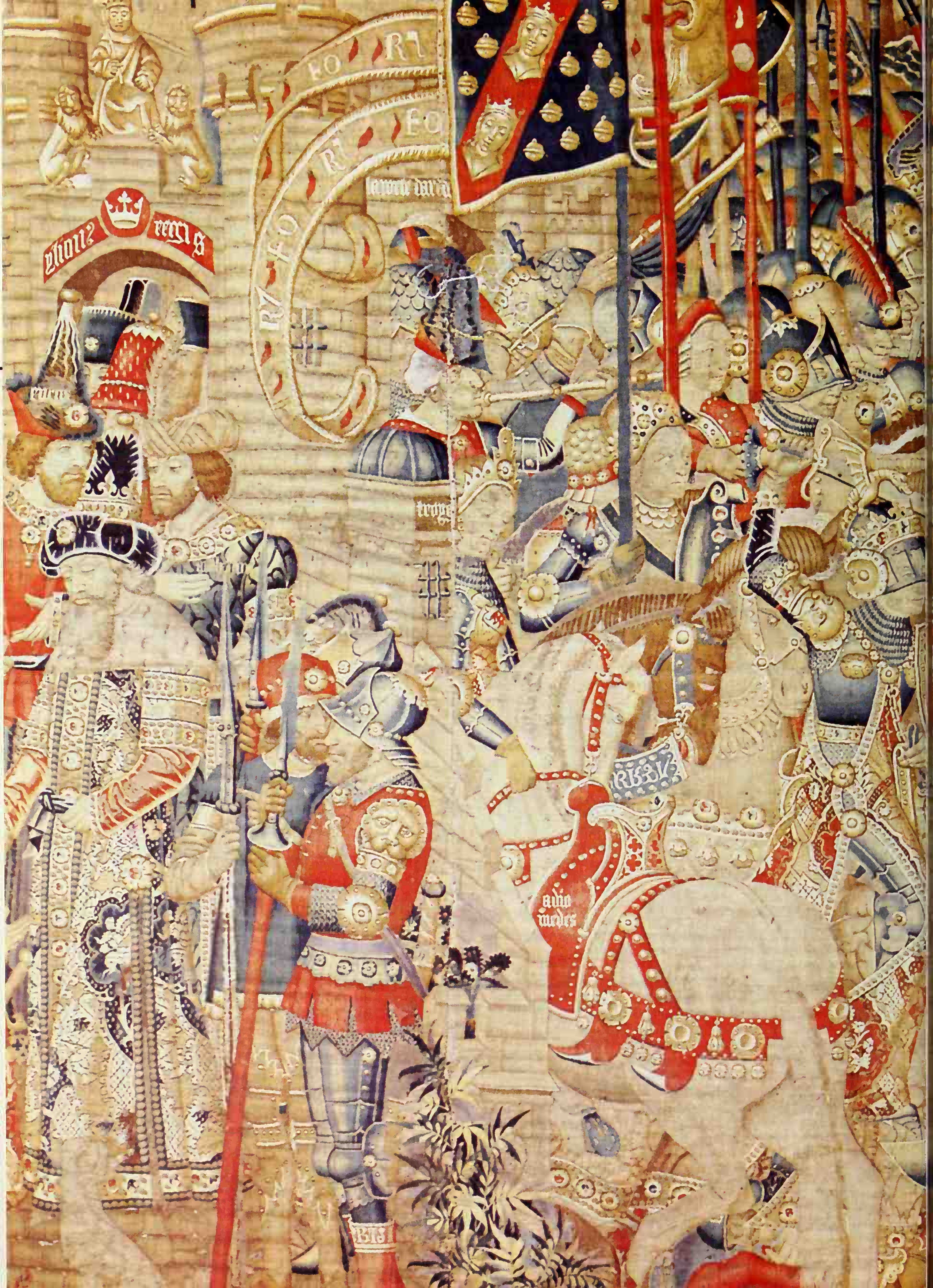
Above The Greeks finally entered Troy by what has become the far-famed stratagem of concealing warriors inside a wooden horse: _The Building of the Trojan Horse,_ by Tiepolo _Following page_ Flemish tapestry of the siege: the tale of Troy was immensely popular in the Middle Ages

Ulysses Remembers Troy

Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy . . .

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the
deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are,
we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Tennyson *Ulysses*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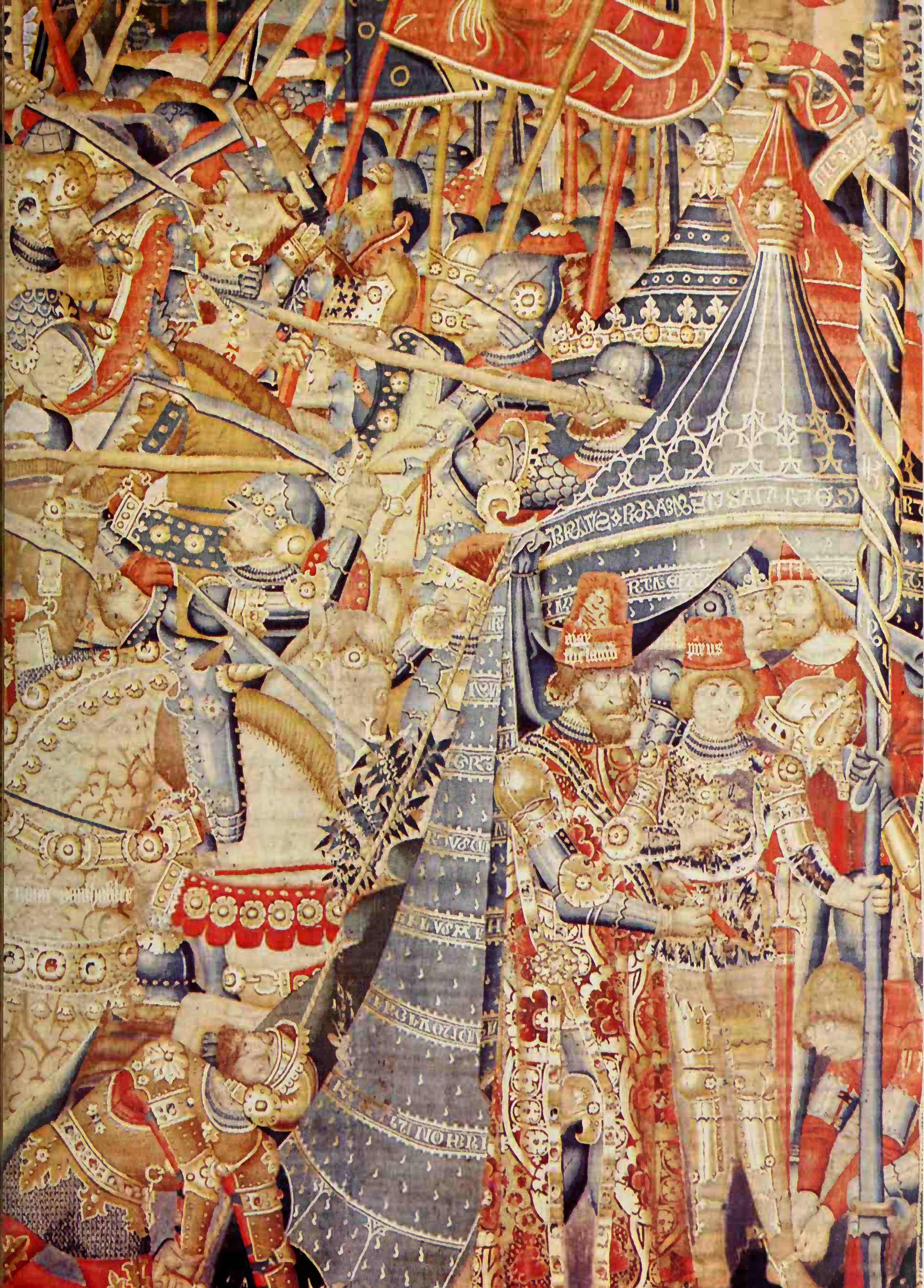

pirus

The ruins, called Hissarlik, he continues, occupy the western tip of a low ridge coming from the east and ending somewhat abruptly in steep slopes on the north and west and a more gradual descent toward the south. Some four miles distant to the westward, across the flat plain of the tree-bordered Scamander, and beyond a line of low hills, is the Aegean Sea. On it, to the southwest, floats the island of Tenedos – which was sacked by Achilles – and much farther northward is Imbros, where, the sorrowing Hecuba says, some of her sons who had been captured by Achilles were sold into slavery. Behind Imbros, on a clear day, one sees the twin-peaked height of Samothrace, and often when the weather is at its clearest, one can even make out the summit of Mount Athos. Looking on all this, one remembers the old story told by Aeschylus of the fire-signals that flashed from peak to peak across the sea and land to Mycenae, announcing to Clytemnestra that Troy had been captured.

The Mound of Hissarlik

Heinrich Schliemann, a German businessman turned archeologist, started to excavate the hill of Hissarlik in 1870 and he conducted seven major campaigns before he died in 1890. His work was then continued by his architect and assistant, Wilhelm Dörpfeld, in two large-scale campaigns in 1893 and 1894. His discoveries were published in his *Troja und Ilion* (1902). Then, between 1932 and 1938, seven campaigns of three to four months were arranged by the University of Cincinnati, with the aim of investigating anew the stratification and other problems. The results of this work under Carl Blegen have now been published in the series called *Troy.*

The evidence of inscriptions found at Hissarlik caused it to be identified more than a century and a half ago as the site of Hellenistic and Roman Ilion. However, some of those who believed in a historical reality behind the Homeric poems considered that the site could be identified in the stronghold known as Bali Dagh, above the gorge through which the Scamander flows from the hills into the lower plain. In 1822 Charles Maclaren collected, in his *Dissertation on the Topography of the Plain of Troy*, all the relevant data from the *Iliad* and compared it with the best modern maps. As a result he revived the idea, prevalent from classical to Roman times, that Hellenistic and later Ilion lay upon the same site as the Homeric Troy. Frank Calvert, some 50 years later, arrived at a similar conclusion and, in 1865, put his theory to the test of actual excavation on a small scale. This produced Roman, Hellenistic and prehistoric pottery and other objects. When Schliemann visited the Troad in 1868, Calvert showed him the site. He agreed that Hissarlik was a more likely possibility for the site of Troy than Bali Dagh, and determined to begin his excavations there.

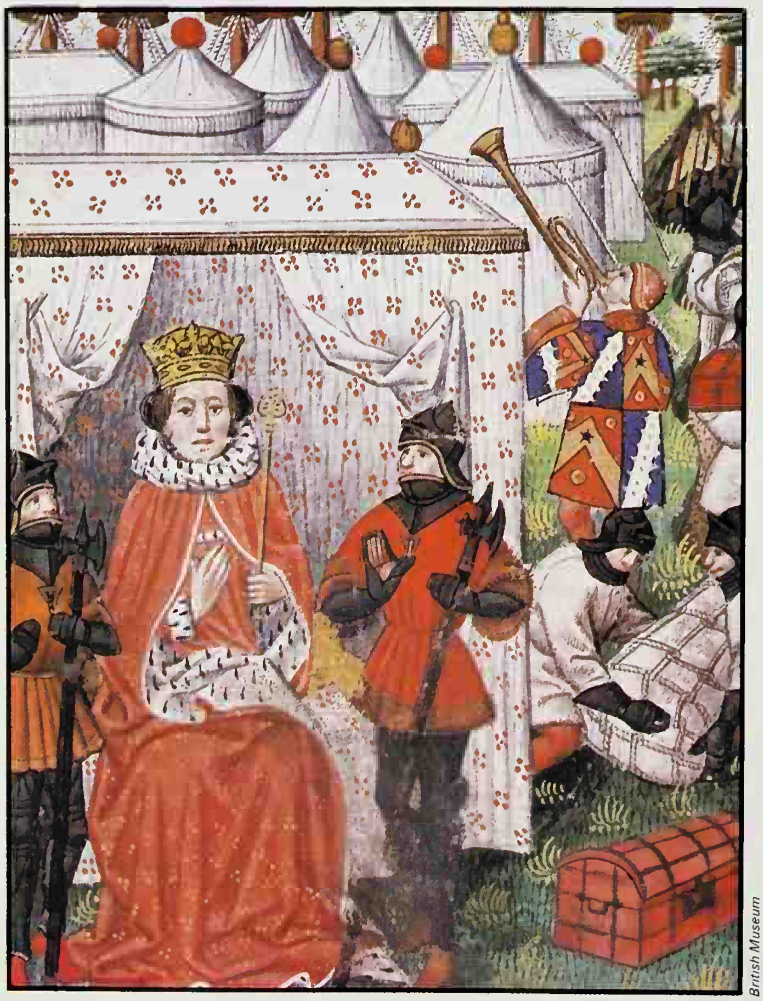
The Hissarlik mound had a length c about 200 metres maximum and was unde 150 metres wide. It went up to about 3 metres above the level of the plain at it northern extremity. As Blegen says: 'For a administrative centre and a capital th situation was admirably suited, both fo security and for economic reasons. It la near enough to the sea to have landin places and perhaps a small port or tw within easy reach, and yet far enough awa to be reasonably safe from sudden hostil attacks or piratical raids. It also controlle a land route that apparently came up alon the western coastal region of Asia Minor t the shortest crossing of the straits fror Asia to Europe. From its vantage grounds i could no doubt likewise dominate traffic u and down the straits, and perhaps tolls c some kind were exacted from those wh passed.'

In *Troy and the Trojans* Blegen gives th following chronological table:

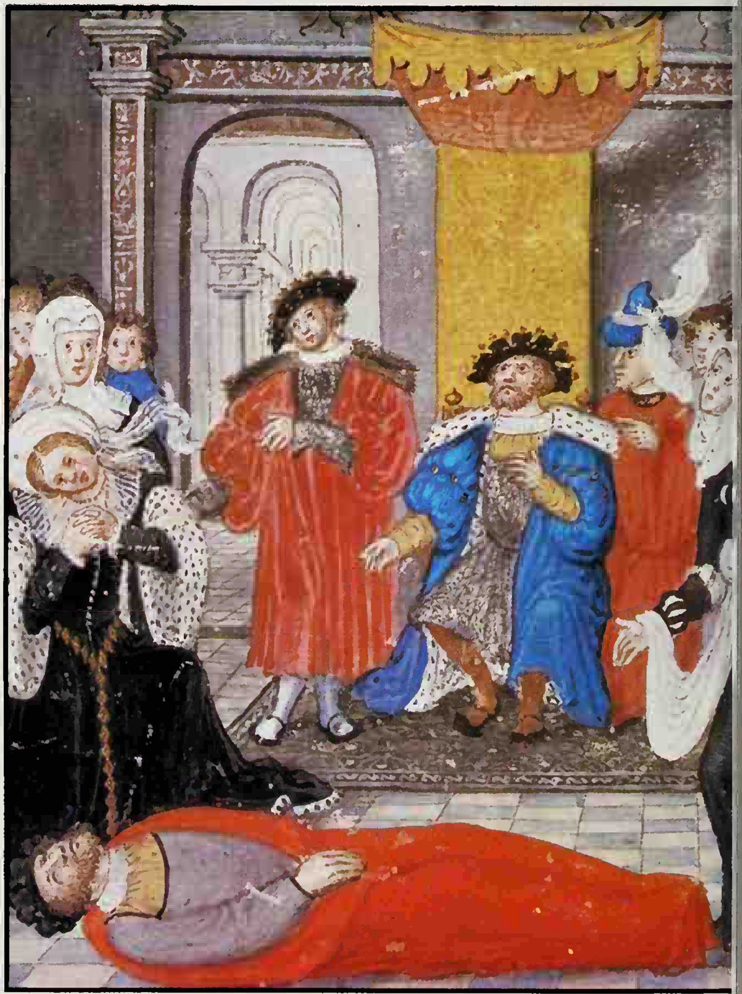
Troy	I	3000–2500 BC
	II	2500–2200
	III	2200–2050
	IV	2050–1900
	V	1900–1800
	VI	1800–1300
	VII(a)	1300–1260
	VII(b)1	1260–1190
	VII(b)2	1190–1100
	VIII	700–

He is, however, careful to point out that th

Scenes from Lydgate's *Siege of Troy,* early 15th century *Left* Agamemnon, the Greek leader, in his tent *Right* King Priam, the ruler of Troy, mourns for Hector, the most redoubtable of the Trojan champions, who was killed by the Greek Achilles



British Museum



dates given, making no claim to represent more than a general approximation, with a wide margin of error in each direction, essentially follow the conclusions of the Cincinnati Expedition. Though these have been accepted by some scholars, they have been rejected in varying degrees by others. Also, a general chronology, as he says, cannot safely be worked out from the evidence of any one site alone. This must be based on the results obtained at many sites, with due allowance for local accidents and vicissitudes. The large establishments often afford a less trustworthy record than more modest settlements, which sometimes escaped the disturbance caused by grading, changing of levels, and deep digging for the foundations of palaces and great structures. Whole underlying layers could easily be eliminated by ambitious works in later times, as is well illustrated in the central part of the citadel at Troy itself.

Break with the Past

The archeology of Troy, then, dates back for about 5000 years. The first five settlements belong to the Early Bronze Age and are marked by a stratified deposit of some 12 metres in thickness. From the beginning the settlement was a kind of fortified stronghold and the debris of Troy I alone consisted of no less than ten phases of building. The fortification wall in this first phase of the occupation of the site is its most peculiarly impressive feature, some of it found standing to a height of about ten feet 5000 years after its construction. Well-built houses were sometimes coated with plaster and there were woven mats on the floors.

Troy VI of the Middle Bronze Age shows marked and novel differences from what had gone before. Blegen is not alone in thinking that these differences indicate a clear break with the past, and the arrival and establishment of a new people endowed with a heritage of its own. This new people could well have been culturally, perhaps ethnically, closely related to the Mycenaean Greeks.

R. F. WILLETTS

FURTHER READING: M. Forrest ed., *Troy and the Early Greeks* (Cambridge U. Press, 1973); C. W. Blegen and others, *Troy* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1950–58, 4 vols).

TRUMPET

'BEHOLD, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed' (1 Corinthians, chapter 15). This tremendous passage in St Paul was familiar to generations of Christians through its use in the funeral service, and the picture of the great archangel sounding the last trump and the dead rising from their graves in response was part of the traditional Christian picture of what would happen at the Last Judgement.

In 1 Thessalonians (chapter 4) St Paul again refers to Christ descending from heaven, 'with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God', to judge the living and the dead. And in Matthew (chapter 24) Jesus is quoted as describing what will happen at 'the close of the age': the sun and moon will be darkened, the stars will fall from heaven, and all the people of the earth will see 'the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.'

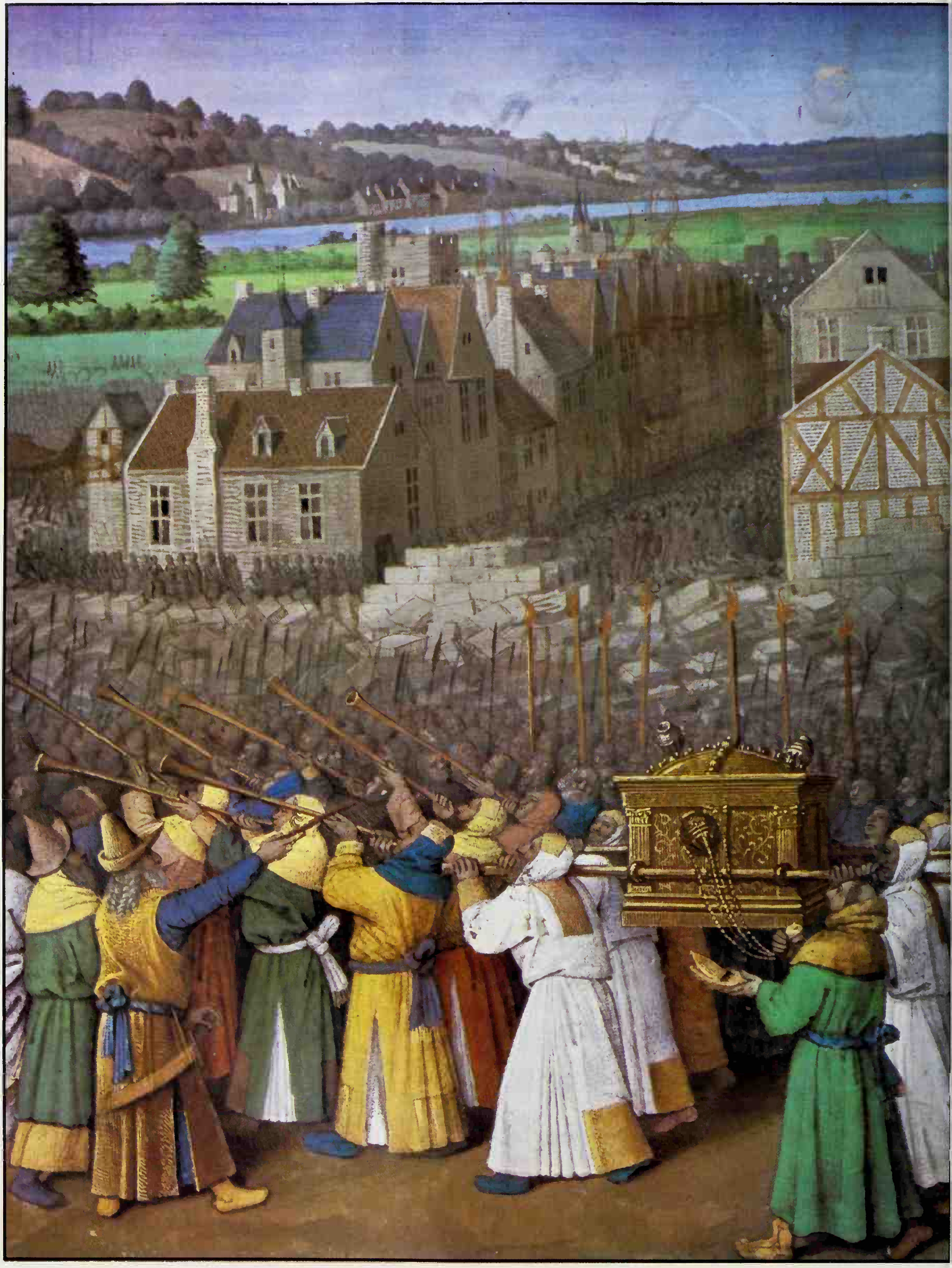
This Christian association of the trumpet with the judgement at the end of the world goes back directly to a verse in Isaiah (27.13) which says that in the days to come a great trumpet will be blown and all the scattered people of God will reunite to worship him in Jerusalem. More generally, it goes back to the use of trumpets in Jewish ritual and the Old Testament association of the trumpet with the voice, power and judgement of God.

In many parts of the world the harsh, strident, carrying call of a horn or trumpet has been regarded, on occasion, as the voice of a supernatural being, and the same sound has also been used to attract the attention of supernatural beings. When God descended

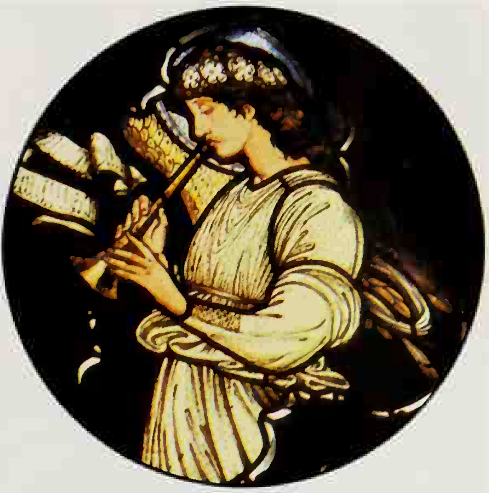
E R
DIEU ET MON DROIT

John Moss

The trumpet or horn has a heart-stirring sound, connected with its use in hunting and war, and in salutes to kings and heroes. War horns and trumpets were originally blown to convey signals and to frighten the enemy



Left **Sacred trumpets, made from ram's horns and blown by priests, were used at Jericho to create a blast of sound which knocked down the city walls: *The Fall of Jericho*, by Jean Fouquet, c 1475 *Right* An angel with a trumpet, from a window in Oxford Cathedral**


Sonia Halliday

on Mount Sinai to deliver the Ten Commandments, 'there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast', which made all the people afraid (Exodus chapters 19, 20). The author of Revelation heard behind him 'a loud voice like a trumpet', and turned to see that the speaker was Christ in majesty (chapter 1). It was the Jewish custom to blow trumpets at all religious feasts, on the first day of each month, and at the daily sacrifice, when the sound of the trumpet was the voice of the people calling to God. The deity himself had instructed Moses to have silver trumpets made, which were to be sounded to remind him of the people's presence and needs (Numbers, chapter 10).

The Feast of Trumpets was held in the autumn, on the first day of the seventh month; it was later termed the New Year but was originally the opening of the yearly period of repentance that reached its peak on the Day of Atonement (see JUDAISM). The day of the Feast of Trumpets was said to be the day on which God judged mankind and allotted rewards and punishments, and some said that the trumpets were sounded to confuse Satan, the prosecutor in the heavenly court. This reinforced the connection between the trumpet and God as Judge, already suggested by the trumpet blast on Sinai.

The rabbis also connected the trumpets of Exodus and Isaiah, and the Feast of Trumpets, with the story of how Abraham obeyed God's orders to sacrifice Isaac, his son (Genesis, chapter 22). He bound Isaac and laid him on the altar but at the last moment his instructions were changed, and instead of Isaac he sacrificed a ram which he found nearby, caught by its horns in a thicket. This ram, it was said, had been specially created by God. It was the ram's left horn which God sounded on Sinai, and it was the right horn which would be blown in the time of the Messiah to summon the strayed sheep of Israel back to Jerusalem. The sacrifice of the ram had occurred on the first day of the seventh month, and the sounding of ram's horn trumpets on that day had been commanded by God as a reminder of Abraham's obedient binding of Isaac and a sign that the congregation saw themselves as bound offerings to God.

The Horn of Heimdall

The use of an animal's horn as a musical instrument, like the Jewish *shofar* of ram's horn, would naturally tend to carry the associations of power, virility and aggression linked with horns (see HORNS). In many societies trumpets have been used to herald the accession of a king, for sounding alarms and for signalling in battle, because the sound carries well and in the hope of frightening the enemy. The fall of Jericho was accomplished by the blast of the ram's horn trumpets, combined with the magic of the number seven, creating so formidable a battering ram of sound that the walls of the city fell down flat. The trumpets were blown by the priests who escorted the sacred ark of God, and when the ark was brought to Jerusalem by King David seven priests blew trumpets before it (Joshua, chapter 6; 1 Chronicles 15.24).

These priests reappear in the book of Revelation (chapter 8) in the form of the seven angels who stand before God, who are given seven trumpets. They blow them in turn and appalling plagues and horrors strike the world. When the seventh trumpet sounds (chapter 11), voices are heard in heaven proclaiming that the kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of God.

The association of the trumpet or horn with the end of the world appears again in Norse mythology. Heimdall, the watchman of the gods who never sleeps, lives beside Bifrost, the rainbow bridge, at the point where it reaches the sky. At the first signs of the approaching end he will blow his great horn Gjallarhorn (ringing horn), whose note is heard through all the worlds (see SCANDINAVIA). There is a rough parallel here with the Christian belief that an archangel, Gabriel or Michael, will wake the dead at the end of time with the blast of the Last Trump.

In Bali spirits were summoned by blasts on horns or trumpets, which were blown again to drive them away. In some societies a medicine-man talks through a trumpet when he is speaking with the voice of a god or spirit, and the spirits of the dead played trumpets at shows staged by some 19th-century mediums. In the Alps the wooden trumpet called the Alphorn, used for calling cattle and signalling over long distances, was believed to protect men and beasts from evil when sounded at dusk. Some ceremonial trumpets are of enormous size, the lengthening of the tube deepening the note. Metal trumpets carried in funeral processions in China are so long that they can only be played when rested on the ground during a pause in the procession, and the Tibetans and Mongols used copper trumpets 16 feet long.

Triton, the Greek merman, who played only a very minor role in mythology, was a favourite subject in art and was frequently shown blowing a conch shell. Virgil's *Aeneid* (book 6) tells the story of how Misenus, the Trojan trumpeter, who excelled all others in his skill at 'stirring hearts with his trumpet of bronze and kindling the blaze of battle with his music', rashly challenged the gods to outdo him. The jealous Triton trapped him among rocks at the sea's edge and drowned him.

The horn or trumpet has indeed a heart-stirring sound, connected with its use in hunting and war, and in salutes to kings and heroes. In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* the pilgrims come to the river of death, the last barrier that separates them from the Celestial City, and Mr Valiant-for-truth is summoned to cross: 'So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.'

TULPA

THE EVOCATION OF a *tulpa*, an entity created entirely by an act of the imagination, was described by Alexandra David-Neel in her book *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (1929). The product of intensive visualization techniques, the tulpa is given form in much the same way as in the evocations of tutelary deities practised by Tibetan mystics, but the method differs in that there is no pictorial representation on which to begin the effort of concentration.

Madame David-Neel set out to create a monk, 'short and fat, of an innocent and jolly type', rather like Friar Tuck. At first the tulpa was merely subjective, but in time it began to assume a life-like existence of its own until it could not be distinguished from reality. It accompanied her on a journey, during which she realised, to her dismay, that she had lost control, and that the monk would appear from time to time independently of her will.

Then the tulpa began to change, from a plump and benevolent being into a slimmer, more sinister, one. He began touching Madame David-Neel, and rubbing up against her. Her companions asked her who the 'stranger' was that they saw with her; some spoke to him, but he did not reply.

At this point Madame David-Neel decided that matters had gone too far, and that it was essential to rid herself of the tulpa. By her account, however, it took six months of intense effort to dispose of it, and she described the whole episode as 'very bad luck'.

A French operatic soprano, explorer and mystic, the first western woman to enter Lhasa, and the author of many books on Buddhism, Alexandra David-Neel lived to the age of 101, dying in 1969. When she was 90 one of her secretaries accused her of having made up much of her memoirs, but she was generally revered, among her many honours being the *Légion d'Honneur*, the gold medal of the Geographical Society of Paris, and the silver medal of the Royal Belgian Geographical Society.

TURIN SHROUD

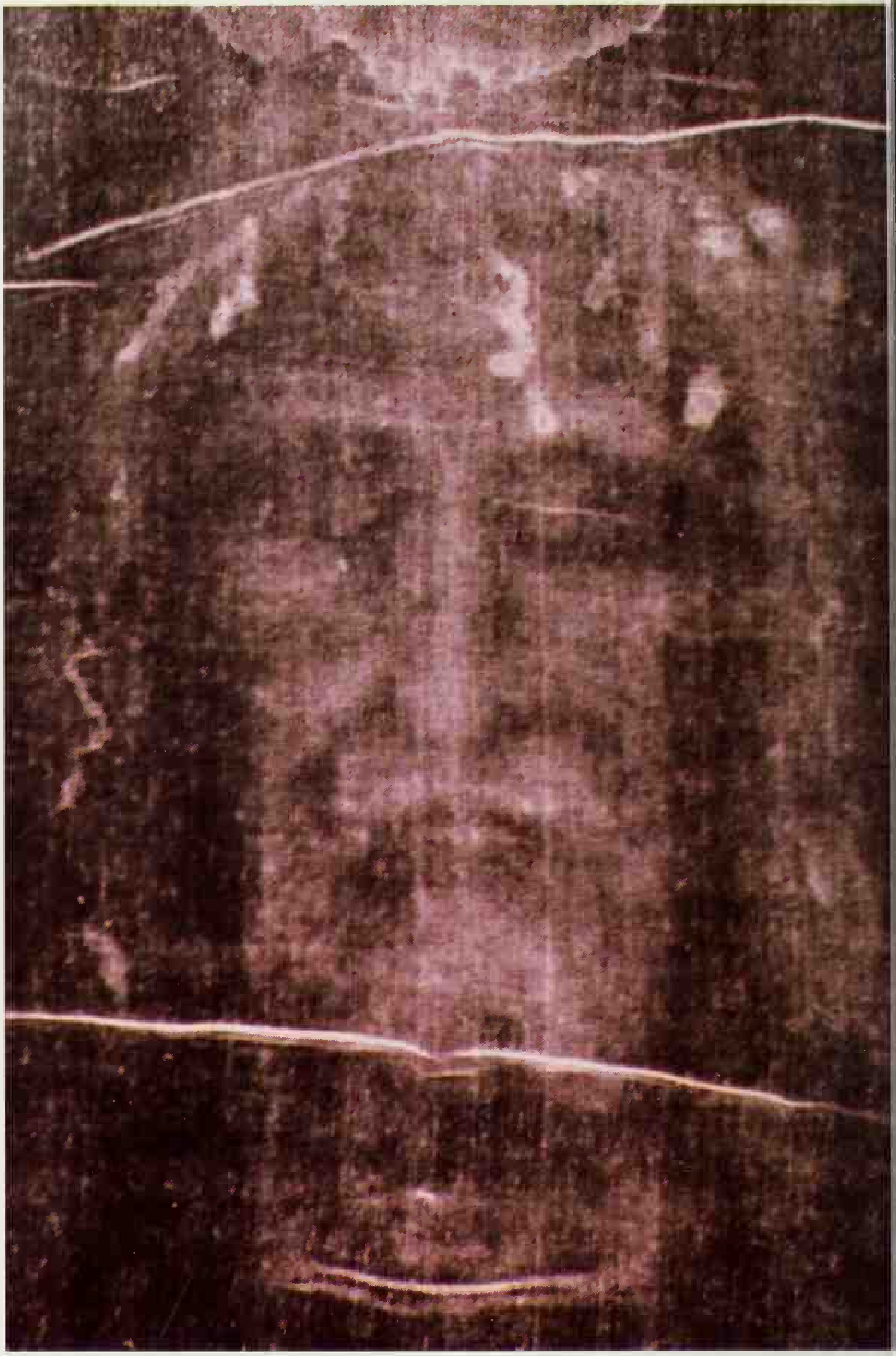
THE HOLY SHROUD OF TURIN was one of the most venerated objects in Christendom for centuries and remains fascinating, even though radiocarbon dating has proved it to be a medieval fake.

The shroud is a piece of cloth, some 14ft long, on which can be seen the faint, brownish image of both sides of the body of a naked man with the marks of crucifixion: wounds in the hands, feet and side. The marks show up more clearly in photographic negatives. Darker stains look like blood from the wounds. The marks of the crown of thorns can be seen on the head, the stripes of scourging on the back, bruises on the shoulders caused by carrying the cross, and lacerations on the knees caused by falls.

The man would have stood just over 6ft tall and was powerfully built. The face is bearded, strong and impressive, the hair long, the eyes closed in death. Many devout Christians long believed this to be the veritable likeness of Christ himself, imprinted on the winding sheet in which his body was wrapped for burial after it had been taken down from the cross on Golgotha.

The shroud is kept in its own chapel in Turin Cathedral. It first emerges into the light of recorded history in France in the 14th century. In 1389 the Bishop of Troyes wrote a letter to Pope Clement VII in Avignon, complaining that the church in the little village of Lirey had obtained a cloth on which, by ingenious fakery, the image of a crucified man had been depicted, and it was claimed that this was Christ's shroud. This false claim, the bishop said, had aroused tremendous interest and crowds of people had flocked to see the shroud in the church, whose clergy had staged fake healings in the shroud's presence and cynically made money out of the deluded pilgrims.

All this had begun years before, wrote the bishop, in the time of his predecessor (hence in the 1350s or 1360s), and the artist who had painted the image had finally admitted that it was his work. The shroud had been put away, but now it had been brought out again to attract fresh pilgrims. The bishop was in no doubt that the shroud was a fake, but the pope issued a bull which encouraged the belief that it was genuine, and the remarkable relic was to have a long career.



It appears that, before it reached the church at Lirey, the shroud had belonged to the church's founder, a gallant knight named Geoffrey de Charny, who was killed in battle against the English in 1356. His widow married a nobleman with estates in Savoy and in 1453 the shroud came into the possession of the royal house of Savoy. It was venerated at their capital of Chambéry until 1578, when it was moved to Turin. Not until the first photograph of it was taken in 1898, however, was the shroud's remarkable character widely appreciated. New photographs, in 1931, showed more detail.

Scientific examination was not permitted by the Church authorities until the end of the 1960s, and the shroud became the object of passionate interest and curiosity. Pollen samples suggested that the fabric had been in Palestine or Turkey at some stage in its career. US Air Force scientists examined the 1931 photographs and reported evidence that coins had been placed over the dead man's eyes – an Italian professor claimed they could be identified as Roman coins of Pontius Pilate's time – and that the image had been imprinted on the cloth by some process akin to scorching. It was now suggested that the image of Christ had been printed on the shroud by a burst of intense radiation from Jesus's resurrecting body.

At the same time, other theorists were constructing a hypothetical history of the shroud before the 14th century. It was linked somehow with the Holy Mandylion, a cloth known to have been venerated in Constantinople for 300 years, from 944 to 1204, which had the likeness of Jesus miraculously imprinted on it. It was so holy that only the Emperor and the highest-ranking clergy were allowed to see it, and had come from Edessa (the modern Urfa in Turkey), where it had been rediscovered in the 6th century. Was 'the holy face of Edessa' the original shroud of Turin?

The whole enticing edifice of theory came crashing to the ground when radiocarbon dating was at last allowed and three laboratories – at the universities of Oxford and Arizona and the Zurich Polytechnic – reported in 1988 that the cloth dated from between 1260 and 1390 AD, a date fitting comfortably with the actual known history of the relic. The Bishop of Troyes was vindicated at last.

TWELVE

IN THE CLOSING chapters of the book of Revelation, the holy city, new Jerusalem, is seen coming down out of heaven from God, 'its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.'

One of the striking things about this vision of perfection and loveliness is the repeated use of the number 12. The city's wall has 12 gates at which 12 angels stand and on which are inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. The wall has 12 foundation-stones, on which are written the names of the 12 apostles and which are adorned with 12 jewels. Within the city stands the tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The city's dimensions are stated in terms of 12. It is a cube, 12,000 stadia long, broad and high, and its wall stands 144 cubits high. But the stadia and cubits are not earthly measurements; the cube means perfection, and 12 is used all through this passage as a number of completeness.

The year is made of 12 months, at the end of which the sun and the life of Nature return to their starting point, as it were, to run their course through the seasons again, and so 12 is the number of an entire cycle or a whole set. It is related to 7, another number of completeness, because both are made of 3 and 4, multiplied or added, and both are regarded by the numerologically minded as linked with the essential underlying structure of the universe. There are the 7 planets of antiquity, 7 days of the week, 7 colours, 7 notes of the musical scale, and the 12 months, 12 zodiac signs, 12 hours of the day. Some Christian writers said that Jesus chose 12 disciples to make known the Trinity to the four corners of the world, and to show that he is the spiritual day or the perfect year, with the apostles as the hours or months.

The earliest code of Roman laws was written on 12 tablets.

In Exodus (chapter 28) there are instructions for making the vestments of the high priest, including the mysterious 'breastpiece of judgement' on which were to be set four rows of precious stones, three in each row: sardius (or cornelian), topaz, carbuncle; emerald, sapphire, diamond; jacinth, agate, amethyst; beryl, onyx, jasper. The 12 stones were to be engraved with the names of the 12 tribes. 'So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgement upon his heart, when he goes into the holy place, to bring them to continual remembrance before the Lord.'

Much later, in the 1st century AD, the philosopher Philo Judaeus thought that the 12 jewels stood for the signs of the zodiac, and the historian Josephus said that the high priest's robes symbolized the entire universe, with the jewels representing either the months or the zodiac signs.

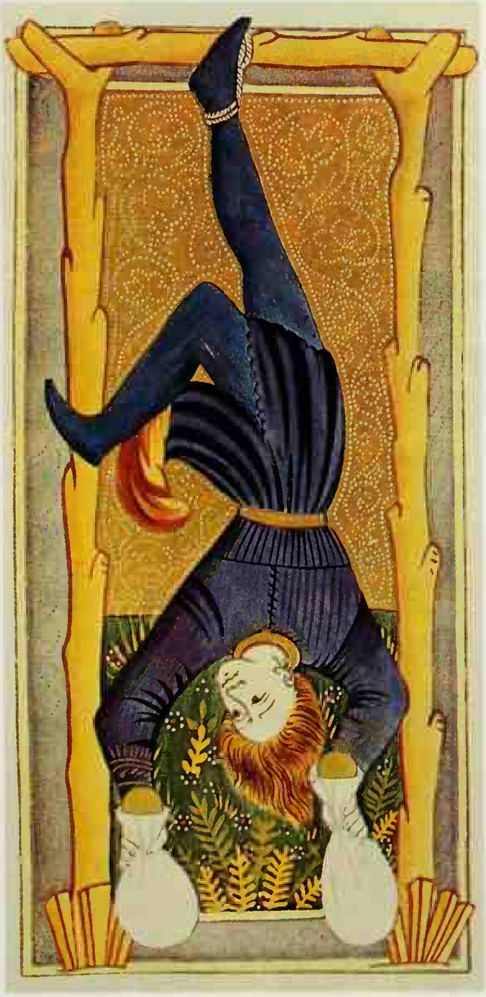
In Numbers (chapter 2) there are instructions for the order of march and the pitching of camp when the Israelites are travelling through the wilderness towards the Promised Land. The camp is to be laid out in a square, like the holy city of Revelation later, with three tribes on each side and the Levites in the middle. When Elijah was engaged in his contest against the priests of Baal, he built his altar of 12 stones, to stand for the 12 tribes (1 Kings, chapter 18).

The gospels do not explain why Jesus chose 12 apostles, rather than some other number, but he is quoted as telling them that 'in the new world' they would sit on 12 thrones to judge the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19.28). They are listed in St Luke (chapter 6) as Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, another James, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot.

In the book of Revelation (chapter 7) an angel appears and 'seals' the servants of God, making God's mark on the foreheads of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes, 144,000 in all, who are later (chapter 14) seen standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb and singing a new song before the throne of God. Here the 12 tribes presumably stand for the whole body of God's people and the 144,000 for the Christian martyrs slaughtered in the persecutions, with the counting in terms of 12 again a mark of completeness. The list of tribes in chapter 7 omits the tribe of Dan, presumably because the author, following up on Jewish traditions, expected the Antichrist to emerge from their ranks.

A New Dial

The 12 stars in the crown of 'the woman clothed with the sun' (chapter 12) are generally agreed to be the signs of the zodiac, but whether there is any astrological significance in the repeated use of 12 in the vision of the holy city is doubtful. The description of the city draws on the account of the Israelite camp in the wilderness and on the city of Ezekiel's vision, which also had 12 gates for the 12 tribes (Ezekiel, chapter 48). The 12 jewels which adorn the foundation stones are evidently related to the stones on the high priest's breastpiece, but they are given in a different order and they are now connected with the 12 apostles instead of the 12 tribes, presumably as a sign that the 'new Israel' of Christianity has replaced the old. The order of the jewels is a puzzle and, if they are related to the zodiac signs at all, they seem to be listed in the reverse order.



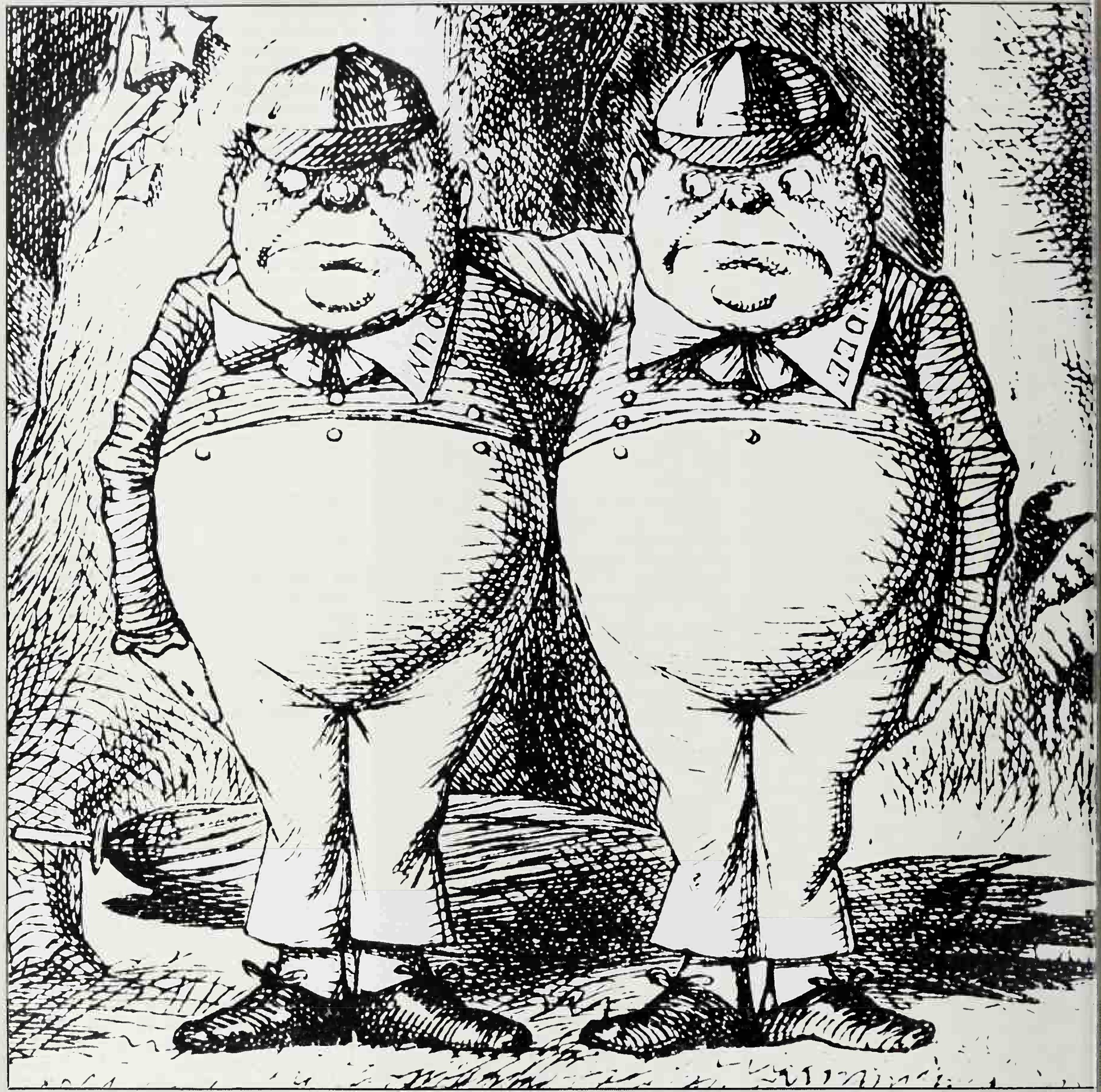
'And Judas went away and hanged himself'; the twelfth card of the Tarot pack is believed by some to be a representation of the twelfth apostle: the Hanged Man from the 15th-century 'Gringonneur' pack

A still surviving example of a cycle of 12 is the 12 days of Christmas, ending on Twelfth Night (the evening of 5 January) which used to be an occasion of feasting and revelry (see BEAN; CHRISTMAS). A parallel was seen between the 12 days of Christmas and the 12 months of the ensuing year, hence the old belief that it is unlucky to take down the Christmas decorations before Twelfth Night, because to shorten the festive season is to curtail the prosperity of the months ahead and possibly the life of a member of the family, who may die before the year is out. This has in turn created the comparatively new superstition that it is unlucky to leave the Christmas decorations in place after Twelfth Night, which is to go beyond the proper limits, and so is dangerous.

The Christmas season also inspired carols and songs in which the 12 days are connected with ideas or creatures or objects, as in 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', in which the days are linked with a partridge in a pear tree, two turtle-doves, three French hens, four calling birds, five gold rings, six geese a-laying, seven swans a-swimming, eight maids a-milking, nine ladies dancing, ten lords a-leaping, 11 pipers piping and 12 drummers drumming.

The 12 hours on the clockface could similarly inspire a counting song of this sort, such as 'A New Dial', which begins (in the version in *The Oxford Book of Carols*): 'What are they that are but one? One God, one Baptism, and one Faith, one Truth there is, the scripture saith.' It continues with two Testaments (the Old and the New), the three persons of the Trinity, four evangelists, the five senses, the six working days of the week, the seven liberal arts, the eight beatitudes (of the Sermon on the Mount), the nine Muses, the ten Commandments, the 11,000 Virgins of Cologne (legendary martyrs massacred by the Huns), and finishes triumphantly with the 12 apostles and 12 articles of the Apostles' Creed. Here again, in crude form, is the attempt to picture the structure of the universe as arranged in terms of 12.

FURTHER READING: G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St John The Divine* (Black, 1966).



'If telepathic communication is to be found anywhere, it is much more likely to exist between identical twins than between ordinary persons': that there is something uncanny about twins has long been recognized, and in many societies the birth of twins has been greeted with fear – fear of both the children and their mother

TWINS

THE PHENOMENON of twins appears always to have exercised a remarkable fascination. Statistically it is not uncommon, and yet it is sufficiently unusual to call for comment and to arouse interest. As we follow the phenomenon back into the labyrinths of religion, mythology and folklore, however, we find other aspects besides the innocent curiosity of the envious bystander. There is also the aspect of fear – fear of both the children and their mother – which demanded special precautions, or worse, on birth, and continued respect and reverence afterwards. In addition, many peoples have worshipped at least one pair of twin gods, either brothers or brother and sister, reflecting some of the concerns and taboos which have surrounded human twins. Twins have been useful material for many novelists and scientific investigators, not least because of the extraordinary affinity which has been seen to exist between them. In short, twinship shows a type of human relationship consisting not only in similarity of appearance but in something more mysterious an intangible; it is this intangible quality whic has left such fascinating traces in all th frontier sciences.

It is common knowledge today that twin are of two kinds: identical twins, of the sam sex, having developed from one fertilize egg (monozygotic twins); and fratern

The reason for the psychic affinity that sometimes exists between twins still eludes invest gators. This is reflected in Tweedledum an Tweedledee, the best-known twins in literature when Alice meets them, only the words 'dun and 'dee' are visible; 'Tweedle', the mysteriou element they have in common, is hidden fro her. Illustration to *Through the Looking-Glas* by Sir John Tenniel

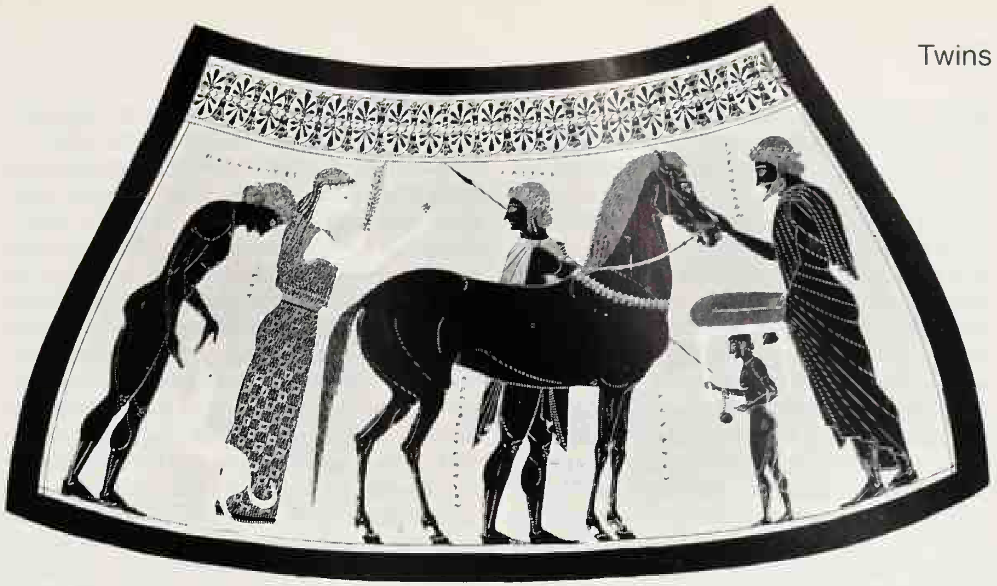
vins, who may or may not be of the same ex, but who have developed from two ndependently-fertilized eggs (dizygotic vins). In pre-literate societies, however, nis important distinction is as a rule not nown, or at least known only by its effect; nd in comparison with the primary belief nat normal human births take place rictly one at a time, the birth of two nildren more or less simultaneously from ne same mother is inevitably regarded as a pecial manifestation of supernatural power. This of course applies even more strongly triplets and other 'supertwins'.)

In the so-called primitive and archaic ultures, which have been dominated by a noroughgoing belief in the reality and nfluence of a supernatural order alongside nd within the natural, the act of giving irth has always been hedged about with aboos, since there the supernaturals are ctive (see BIRTH; FERTILITY). But since umans normally have only one child at a me, the birth of twins seems always to ave been regarded as a temporary disturbance of the balance between Nature and the upernatural, and therefore 'uncanny'. Man's eactions to such manifestations have varied nore or less as his reactions to any holy or acred manifestation have varied – between orror, fear, fascination and devotion. As rule, though, definite measures have had be taken in order to restore the balance. ometimes the offending infants have been ut to death, together with their mother; ometimes one child has been destroyed, ne saved; sometimes all three have been everenced as repositories of divine power. lways rituals were resorted to in order to ppease the unusually active spirits.

Betrothed' in the Womb

ince sacredness was the peculiar property f the spirit world, it could provoke one of wo reactions in primitive societies. One vas to destroy whatever was so affected nd thus return it to the spirits, on the rinciple of its being too dangerous to olerate. The other was to accord the nanifestation special honours, since it was oo dangerous not to tolerate. It is recorded hat in the Niger delta area at the turn of he century a woman who had given birth o twins was simply too dangerous to touch; he was allowed neither to touch anything elonging to ordinary people nor even to lrink from the same spring. As a result both he and her twins might die from hunger nd exposure, not because of callousness, ut from fear. It is also reported that to say o a woman, 'May you become the mother of wins!' was tantamount to a curse. It eems to have been commonly held that since man could normally father only one child t a time, the second twin was the result ither of the infidelity of the mother, or of he direct intervention of the spirits.

In Togoland, if the twins were of different exes, the boy was kept, the girl disposed of; f both were of the same sex, only the stronger vas kept. In such cases, the surviving child night be given a carved piece of wood, said to epresent the deceased twin; this may have een to prevent the survivor from pining for he deceased, but may also have served the practical purpose of giving the ghost of the child who had died somewhere to return to, other than to the living body of the survivor. One Borneo tribe gave the need to preserve the life of one twin as a motive for killing the other. In a dangerous world, twins, by reason of the bond of sympathy between them, were subject to a double share of danger and misfortune, since each was liable to all the ills which might befall the other.



Mansell Collection

Castor and Polydeuces, the Dioscuri or 'heavenly twins', returning to their parents' home; scene from a Greek amphora, c540 BC. Best known for their protection of travellers, the Dioscuri are representative of the many twin deities, particularly pairs of brothers, who occur in Indo-European culture and who are regarded as helpers of mankind in a special sense. A body of mythological material concerning the classical 'heavenly twins' was assimilated to Christian themes and resulted in the legend that the Apostle Thomas, called Didymus, 'the twin', in the New Testament, was the twin of Jesus Christ; although they were outwardly alike, Jesus was divine and Thomas was human

To some extent, this attitude survives today. According to Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard, twins are still regarded as one single social personality (although not as one individual) among the Nuer. In practice this means that on certain important ritual occasions they must act together. When the senior twin marries, for instance, the junior has an important role to play in the marriage ceremonies; female twins should be married on the same day. When one twin dies, no mortuary ceremonies take place, since it is not possible for the one symbolically to enter into the future life without the other. Among the Lele, according to Mary Douglas, the parents of twins are believed to have been especially honoured by the spirits (the 'positive pole' of sacredness); they are treated as diviners, and are exempted from the normal rituals which are carried out by those who wish to obtain magical powers. A woman who has borne twins does not suffer from the ritual disabilities which normally affect women; she is allowed to attend conferences on 'twin magic' on the same footing as men. As a rule, though, the parents of twins have to be secluded in a special hut for almost a month, until the proper customs have been carried out.

In parts of Nigeria, women who had given birth to twins were sent to live in 'twin towns', where they were maintained by their husbands, but were in effect living in a state of divorce. A variant was in some cases provided by the 'twin-market', where women who had already had twins offered goods for sale, and where something was bought on behalf of the new-born (four-month-old) infants. This again is a means of restoring the disturbed balance of Nature, and of receiving mother and children back into the normal fellowship of the tribe. A woman who died in childbirth was always regarded as dangerous, and it goes without saying that one who died in the course of giving birth to twins was thought to be doubly so.

It is interesting that there seems to have been a close analogy between the second of a pair of twins and the placenta of an ordinary child, which was sometimes called 'the twin'. In either case, the fate of the one (whether child or afterbirth) was closely bound up with that of the other. In parts of India, the connection of boy and girl in the womb seems to have been taken almost as a form of pre-natal incest, while it is on record that in Bali, twins of different sexes were called 'betrothed'.

The Twin Brother of Jesus

There are two kinds of mythological twins: brother and sister, and two brothers. Many myths in which sun and moon are brother and sister, condemned by some primeval transgression, possibly incest, to pursue each other across the heavens, fall into the first category. However, the twin motif is less marked in these stories than in the ancient Indian myth of the first human pair, Yama and Yami. In a hymn of the *Rig-Veda* the first man, Yama, is wooed by his sister, Yami, and in later tradition the two become rulers of the underworld (though in practice Yami fades away almost entirely). The similarity of the names is significant; in many pairs of mythological twins, the closeness of the bonds that bind them together is marked by the practically identical names that they bear.

Far more mythological material has gathered around pairs of brothers than around twins who are brother and sister. In some cases it may well be that the stories have a basis in historical fact. For example there are the two pairs of Old Testament twins, Esau and Jacob (Genesis, chapter 25), and Perez and Zerah (Genesis, chapter 38), the twin sons of Tamar. In the latter case, the mother is said to have conceived twins as a result of harlotry, a belief that has primitive roots. The practice of binding a thread on the first of the infants to emerge from the womb, presumably in order to avoid later complications when it came to determining questions of precedence, is mentioned in the second story.

A curious example, also from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, concerns the Apostle Thomas, who is called Didymus, 'the twin', in the New Testament, and who is traditionally regarded as the first missionary to India. According to a late legend, Thomas was the twin of Jesus Christ, born to Mary shortly after Jesus. The three Magi, when they brought their gifts to the infant Jesus, asked for his swaddling-band as a memento, but were given that of Thomas instead. Jesus and Thomas grew up together, making ploughs and yokes in their father's carpentry shop; the two were outwardly alike, but in reality Jesus was divine, Thomas human. What has happened here is that mythological material concerning the classical 'heavenly twins', the Dioscuri (see below), has become assimilated to Christian themes.

Another interesting example from the borders of the Christian tradition concerns Mani, the founder of Manicheism, who probably lived in the 3rd century AD. Mani claimed to have a 'twin self' in the heavens, who came down and united with him, bringing revelations from the deity. This 'twin' was in fact none other than the Holy Spirit (see GNOSTICISM; MANICHEANS).

However, the best known examples of twin deities come from the wide area of Indo-European culture, from India in the east to Scandinavia in the north. Although the details vary considerably, the outlines are constant: the worship of two brothers who are in a very special sense the helpers of mankind. They are connected in a general way with fertility, and with human birth (not surprisingly, in view of the primitive view of twin births); but in addition they have special links with horses and chariots and harnesses, they make yokes for oxen, and they are believed to be connected with the craft of stonemasonry and the building of cities. They also protect travellers, particularly those who travel by water. These details are not easily reconcilable with one another, and it is impossible even to speculate on the origins of such a wide variety of belief concerning one mode of deity; nevertheless all these points recur frequently.

In Indian tradition, the twin deities are called the Asvins, who are charioteers, rainmakers, and givers of fertility to humans and to the earth. They are also called *natasya*, 'healers', but the fertility aspect i the most prominent; they are invoked in th Hindu marriage ritual, and in the *Rig-Ved* it is said of them: 'You place the child in woman's womb, you place the seed in a beings, that it may grow.'

In the Greek tradition, the heavenl twins were called the Dioskouroi, 'sons o Zeus'. Together with their sister Hele they were born of Zeus and Leda – though i some versions there is an echo of the idea o divided paternity in the tradition that onl one, Polydeuces, was fathered by Zeus; th other, Castor, was the son of Tyndareus King of Sparta. Their worship early passe to Rome, where they received the better known names of Castor and Pollux. They stil retained a wide range of functions, bein connected with the sky, thunder and storms as well as guarding hospitality and oaths. I was, however, for their role in the protectio of travellers that they were best known. A minor illustration of this is found in th Acts of the Apostles (28.11) where Luke an Paul 'set sail in a ship which had wintere in the island (Malta), a ship of Alexandria with the Twin Brothers as figurehead' This ship was clearly believed to be unde the special protection of the patrons o navigation.

Incidentally, for seamen to catch sight o the constellation of Gemini (the heavenl prototype of Castor and Pollux, and probabl of all other Indo-European twin gods as well in a bad storm, was a sign of the greatest goo fortune. The following lines by Macaula refer to a ball of fire which is sometimes see

Mythological twin brothers are often associated with horses, chariots and harnesses, and with stonemasonry and the building of cities; Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome, traced the boundaries of the future city with a bull and heifer, symbols of fertility, yoked together: statue of the twins being suckled by a wolf

Mansell Collection

playing round ships' masts in a storm, and which was once identified with the visible presence of Castor and Pollux:

Safe comes the ship to harbour
Through billows and through gales,
If once the Great Twin Brethren
Sit shining on her sails.

Another name for this electrical phenomenon is 'St Elmo's Fire'.

A similar combination of mythological motifs is found in the story of Romulus and Remus (see FOUNDING OF ROME). They were builders; one, Romulus, was divine; and the bounds of the future city were traced out by a yoked bull and heifer, both symbols of fertility. Another building myth ascribes the founding of Thebes to Amphion and Zethus. Amphion was immortal, Zethus mortal, and both were tamers and riders of horses.

Mention has been made of the Dioscuri and the constellation Gemini. There is no evidence that human twins were believed to be under the special influences of this sign of the zodiac, but twins would clearly have identical, or virtually identical, astrological horoscopes. The convinced believer in astrology finds no difficulty in explaining certain aspects of the psychical affinities that have been observed in twins in terms of identical planetary influences.

Approximately one in every 80 births is of twins, and of the 100 million twins estimated to be alive in the world at the present time, about one-third are monozygotic. They have identical sets of genes, and are alike in every physical detail, even down to their fingerprints, but they often appear to share a mental identity that reveals itself in many striking ways. Much of this will be due to environmental factors: they are usually treated as a pair by their parents – even to the extent of being dressed identically – and they grow up in the same social milieu. Frequently, however, they seem to share a world separated from their families, speaking a language of their own that is unintelligible to an outsider, and appearing to communicate without words, even when apart. Rather more surprisingly, twins who have been separated at birth, and who do not meet until they are mature adults, discover that they, too, are very similar – not only in appearance but in behaviour.

There are many reports of twins who have known when their 'other half' was ill, in danger or in trouble. Like the twins Esteban and Manuel in Thornton Wilder's novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*: '...there existed a need of one another so terrible that it produced miracles as naturally as the charged air of a sultry day produces lightning. The brothers were scarcely conscious of it themselves, but telepathy was a common occurrence in their lives, and when one returned home the other was always aware of it when his brother was still several streets away.' Twins in school have been known to submit examination papers so nearly identical as to suggest to the authorities that there had been collusion, and there have been many other coincidences of thought and action.

Research has been directed to demonstrating twin telepathy – J. B. Rhine tested many pairs of twins for evidence of telepathic communication, and although he did not achieve spectacular results, he recorded that 'cases have been reported to us from time to time of what would appear to be exceptional telepathic rapport between identical twins'. Patterns of the rhythmic electrical changes in the brains of identical twins are often remarkably similar.

Professor Thomas Bouchard of the University of Minnesota carried out a detailed study of more than 30 cases of separated twins, some of which appear to be quite remarkable.

The 'Jim Twins'

In August 1939, in Piqua, Ohio, 5-week-old identical twin boys were adopted by different families. One set of adoptive parents, Jess and Lucille Lewis, lived in Lima, while Ernest and Sarah Springer lived in Dayton, 80 miles away. Both couples were told the other twin had died; but Mrs Lewis learnt the truth by accident when she returned to probate court six years later to complete the adoption procedure.

James Springer grew up believing his twin was dead, while James Lewis hesitated for many years before attempting to trace him. They were 39 when they at last met in February 1979 – and then they were astounded at their similarity, not only physically but emotionally and socially. Both were 6 feet tall and weighed 180 lb. At school both had liked mathematics and hated spelling; and as boys both had owned dogs that they had called Troy. Both had married women called Linda, divorced, and then married Bettys. Their eldest sons were named, respectively, James Alan and James Allan.

Both families had for years taken their holidays on the same beach at the same holiday resort of St Petersburg in Florida, driving there by Chevrolet. Both men had worked as filling station attendants, for the same hamburger chain, and part-time as deputy sheriffs. They had both taken up carpentry and technical drawing as hobbies.

They were compulsive nail-biters, shared the same sleeping problems, smoking and drinking habits, and had the same speech patterns, mannerisms and posture. At the age of 18, both Jims had begun to have tension headaches, which began in the afternoon and developed into migraine; both stopped suffering at the same age, then began again for a time before finally stopping. Both had had confirmed or suspected heart attacks, had put on 10 lb in weight at the same time in their lives, and then lost it.

Obviously, some of the remarkable similarities shown by the 'Jim twins' could be attributed to genetic factors, and others to the fact that they had grown up in similar milieus. But migraine, for instance, has never been considered a hereditary complaint – and the synchronicity of many of their actions almost seemed to suggest that some kind of telepathy had caused them to make the same decision at the same time, as if each were aware of the other's thought processes.

That same year, 1979, saw a number of similar reunions between identical twins who had been separated soon after birth, but none was more striking than that of Oscar Stohr and Jack Yufe.

The Nazi and the Jew

Oscar and Jack were born in Trinidad in 1933, but shortly afterward their parents separated: Oscar was taken by his mother to her homeland, Germany, where he joined the Hitler Youth and was an ardent Nazi. Ironically, Jack was reared in Trinidad as a Jew by his merchant father; he attended synagogue and became a King's Scout.

Jack read about the 'Jim twins'; he wrote to Professor Bouchard, suggesting that a meeting should be arranged with his long-lost brother Oscar. When the two met at the airport, they were both wearing wire-rimmed, rectangular spectacles and blue shirts with epaulettes, and both had clipped moustaches. On inquiry, it was found that they had remarkably similar habits. Both flushed the lavatory before and after use; both kept rubber bands on their wrists; both preferred to eat alone in restaurants, because they liked to read over meals, and cleared the table of unnecessary items before beginning. Both dipped buttered toast into their coffee; read magazines from back to front; and gained amusement from startling people in lifts by sneezing very loudly. They had the same ways of walking and sitting; and – even though Oscar spoke only German and Jack only English – both had the same speech rhythms. After 46 years of separation, Nazi and Jew were still twin brothers.

The extraordinarily similar quirks of behaviour that these two men showed cannot be due to any social influence, since their upbringing – from only a few weeks after birth – was so totally different.

The eminent British psychologist Hans Eysenck has suggested that even the most unexpected similarities of behaviour between separated twins can be attributed to genetic factors. It is difficult, however, to believe that this could be possible in the case of Oscar Stohr and Jack Yufe, which reveals not just the same type of behaviour, but identical little habits that are themselves outstandingly unusual.

The same difficulty arises in two British cases, those of Bridget Harrison and Dorothy Lowe, and Barbara Herbert and Daphne Goodship.

The 'Tiger Twins'

Bridget Harrison and Dorothy Lowe had been separated since their birth in 1943. They lived several hundred miles apart, and discovered they were twins only when they were aged 36 – once again, in 1979. They had both married within a year of each other, and had worn almost identical wedding dresses. One had called her son Richard Andrew, and the other Andrew Richard. Bridget's daughter was named Catherine Louise, Dorothy's Karen Louise (and in fact she was only called Karen to please a relative – Dorothy had wanted to call her Katherine). Both had studied piano to the same grade, then stopped. Both had had meningitis. Both collected soft toys, and had cats named Tiger. Both preferred to

Double Trouble

When the Chaplin twins, Greta and Freda, came up before the magistrates in York, England, in 1980, charged with 'behaving in a manner likely to cause a breach of the peace', they produced a sensation among psychiatrists and social workers. They spoke in unison.

In many other ways they also seemed to be one person. They wore identical grey coats: but as one had originally had four green buttons and the other four grey, they each cut off two, so that now both could have two green and two grey buttons. When they were given two different pairs of gloves, they solved the problem by taking one from each pair; and a gift of two bars of different coloured soap caused them to burst into tears, until they thought of cutting the bars in half and sharing them.

The twins ate in unison, slowly raising forks and spoons together. And most uncannily, they spoke the same words at the same time, especially when excited or under stress.

Although they were clearly psychotic, and extremely difficult to interview, one journalist elicited a significant statement from them: 'We're so close that we're really one person. We know exactly what each other is thinking because we're just one brain.'

Ibedji from western Nigeria: because they believe that the affinity that exists between twins while they are alive continues after the death of one twin, the Yoruba make an effigy of the child who has died. The survivor is taught to tend and care for the statue

leave their bedroom doors ajar, and both wore the same perfume.

They both kept a diary for just one year – 1960 – and the diaries they bought were of the same make and design; more remarkably, the entries they made matched, day for day. Their mannerisms were identical, especially when they laughed. When Professor Bouchard picked them up at the airport in December 1979, he was astonished to observe that both wore seven rings on one hand, and on the other a bracelet and a watch. His studies of them at the university revealed striking similarities in all areas, including their IQs, although interestingly the twin who had been raised in the more modest household performed slightly better.

Sculpting Pair

In July 1939 an unmarried Finnish student gave birth to twin girls in London. The elder (by 12 minutes) was christened Dagmar (or Daphne) Margaret, and the younger Gerda (Barbara). Both were adopted; they were 39 when they met in May 1979, and it had taken Barbara five years research to find her sister.

Both their adoptive mothers died when they were still children. Both girls had fallen down stairs when they were 15, leaving them with weakened ankles. Both met their future husbands at town hall dances when they were 16, and were married in their early twenties in big autumn weddings, complete with choir. Both women miscarried their first babies, then each had two boys followed by a girl (though Daphne had two more children later).

Both women practised sculpture as a hobby; both had a habit of pushing up their noses, which both called 'squidging'. They hated heights and were squeamish about blood. Both tended to giggle a lot. They enjoyed novels by the same authors, and read the same weekly magazine. Neither had ever voted – feeling too ill-informed about the political issues involved – except once when they were both employed as polling clerks. At their reunion both women were wearing beige dresses, brown velvet jackets and identical white petticoats, and had tinted their greying hair the same shade of auburn. There was one noticeable difference: Daphne had been dieting, and was 20 lb lighter than her sister.

How can we possibly explain these cases, except by some form of telepathic communication? In Rome, Professor Luigi Gedda of the Gregor Mendel Institute assembled data on more than 15,000 pairs of twins, and summarised his findings in his book *Chronogenetics* published in 1978.

He pointed out that there seems to be a whole range of major and minor manifestations of the mental bonds that link twins, from the fairly commonplace suggestion of telepathy to what appears to be the actual transmission of pain – and even physical wounds. And even more astonishing are the cases of 'carbon copy' accidents – in which both twins suffer the same injuries, in similar accidents, at almost the same time. These aspects of the twin mind continue to defy rational or scientific explanation.

There are therefore solid reasons why twins should have exercised a perennial fascination, and why so many aspects of the phenomenon should have been recorded and commented upon. Perhaps the genetics of twinship are more thoroughly understood now than at any time in the past; but the psychology of twinship is still very largely a closed book.

We may perhaps end with an allegory. The best-known twins in literature are Lewis Carroll's Tweedledum and Tweedledee (whom no one now remembers to have been originally the 18th-century musicians Handel and Bononcini, whose music the critics professed not to be able to tell apart). In *Through the Looking-Glass* they are introduced thus: 'They were standing under a tree, each with an arm round the other's neck, and Alice knew which was which in a moment, because one of them had 'DUM' embroidered on his collar, and the other 'DEE'. "I suppose they've each got 'TWEEDLE' round at the back of the collar," she said to herself.' If Alice is the eternal investigator, although she may be able to tell a certain amount about the twins in front of her, the writing on the back of their collars – the element which they genuinely have in common – still eludes her. Some day, though, she may find her way round to the back.

ERIC J. SHARPE*

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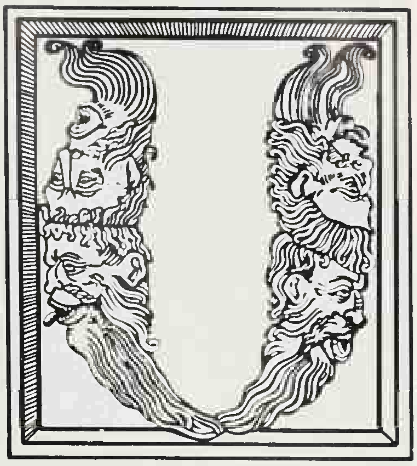

Umbilical Cord

Part of a newly born child, and so believed to be intimately linked with its life and fate; sometimes thought to be the seat of the 'free soul', which wanders in dreams and finally departs from the body in death; it was important to prevent it from falling into the hands of people who might use it to work magic against the child; also used as a cure for barrenness. See BIRTH.

UFOS

DOCUMENTARY REPORTS of strange lights and vessels in the sky date back at least to Pliny's *De Natura Rerum* (c 70 AD), in which there are references to heavenly 'burning shields' and 'flying torches'. From medieval times, the account written by Jacques Duclerc of Arras is typical:

> On All Saints' Day, 1 November 1461, appeared in the sky an object as bright as a bar of iron, as long and wide as a half-moon; it hung stationary for about a quarter-hour, clearly visible, then suddenly spiralled, twisted and turned, and rose into the heavens...

A more widespread and dedicated interest in the phenomena arose in the years immediately following World War II. At first dubbed 'flying saucers', from their most common appearance, they were later dignified with the title of UFO – unidentified flying object. It had long been believed that they were due to heavenly or satanic powers, but with the decline in conventional religious credulity in the 20th century, and a belief in the real possibility of space travel, a more modern form of extra-terrestrial influence was postulated: UFOs, it was said, were spaceships from another world (see ALIEN VISITORS). Observers attribute a wide range of physical effects to the objects, some even claim to have been abducted aboard.

Observations of UFOs tend to come in waves, as the news of a sighting spreads, and enthusiasts gather in the hope of sharing the experience. More mundane explanations for the sightings include reflection of spots of light between the component lenses of cameras and binoculars, or through the curved windows of aircraft; an unusual type of lenticular cloud, which forms over mountain ranges; and secret tests of experimental military aircraft.

This last would explain the reluctance of air forces around the world to take part in serious discussion of UFOs, but as a result enthusiasts have suspected a 'cover-up', and even a conspiracy to suppress information (see MEN IN BLACK).

This bearded female saint is one of the oddest figures thrown up by the medieval cult of saints: created by misunderstanding of the significance of depictions of Christ crucified in a long robe, she was offered oats in London by wives who wanted to be 'uncumbered' of their husbands

ST UNCUMBER

THE MEDIEVAL CULT of saints was as prolific as Greek mythology in creating fantastic figures out of ancient objects and customs no longer understood. For example, the priest whom St Alban, the first British martyr, sheltered during the Diocletianic persecution (c 305), was venerated as St Amphibalus, owing to his being confused with the *amphibalus* or priest's cloak in which St Alban was disguised when arrested. St Barlaam and St Joasaph, two popular medieval saints, owed their origin to a confused account of the Buddha that found its way into Eastern Christendom. And St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins martyred with her at Cologne, whose adventures were so graphically depicted by Flemish artists, probably originated from the fanciful interpretation of an ancient inscription found there.

But no medieval saint was stranger in nature and origin than St Uncumber. Known also as Santa Liberata, Sanct Oncommer, Sainte Wilgeforte, and the Maid Uncumber in various parts of Europe, she was depicted as crucified, wearing a long robe and crown, and bearded.

According to the odd legend associated with her, she had been a daughter of a pagan king of Portugal, whose hand was sought in marriage by a king of Sicily. To preserve her virginity, she prayed fervently to God to disfigure her so that she might escape the abhorrent marriage. Her prayer was answered; God gave her an abundant beard (*prolixam barbam*). Rejected in disgust by her princely suitor and publicly professing her devotion to Christianity, she was taken out and crucified by her enraged father.

How this strange legend originated can be reasonably explained. Although the portrayal of the crucified Christ unclothed goes back to the 5th century (as the Crucifixion scene carved on the doors of Santa Sabina in Rome shows) Syrian Christians from about the same period preferred to represent him as wearing a long tunic, a *colobium*, on the cross.

The 'Manly Virgin'

Well before the 12th century an image of the crucified Christ in this Syrian tradition, at Lucca in northern Italy, became famous as the 'Volto Santo', known in English as the Holy Face of Lucca. Its popularity among pilgrims led to its reproduction elsewhere in Europe for a time; but the more realistic presentation of the unclothed Christ eventually prevailed. When the significance of the enrobed crucifixes had become forgotten, a new explanation was sought. The long robe was taken as indicating that the crucified figure was that of a female saint, and the beard was explained, in France, in terms of the legend of Sainte Wilgeforte, the name probably being a popular corruption of the Latin *virgo fortis*, which means 'manly virgin'.

The English name 'Uncumber' for the saint seems to have given rise to another curious explanation. According to Michael Nodde, writing in 1554, 'If a wife were weary of a husband she offered oats at Poules (St Paul's) in London to St Uncumber'. Speculation about this custom is recorded by Sir Thomas More in his *Dialogue*. It was suggested that the oats were offered to the saint, 'because she should provide a horse for an evil husband to ride to the devil upon, for that is the thing that she is so sought for as they say. In so much that women hath therefore change her name, and instead of saint Wilgeforte call her saint Uncumber, because they reckon that for a peck of oates she will not fail to uncumber them of their husbands'.

The cult of this strange saint flourished in France, Belgium, England, Spain, Germany and Bohemia. Her bearded image was still being venerated at Saalfeld, near Weimar in Germany, until comparatively modern times.

S.G.F.BRANDON

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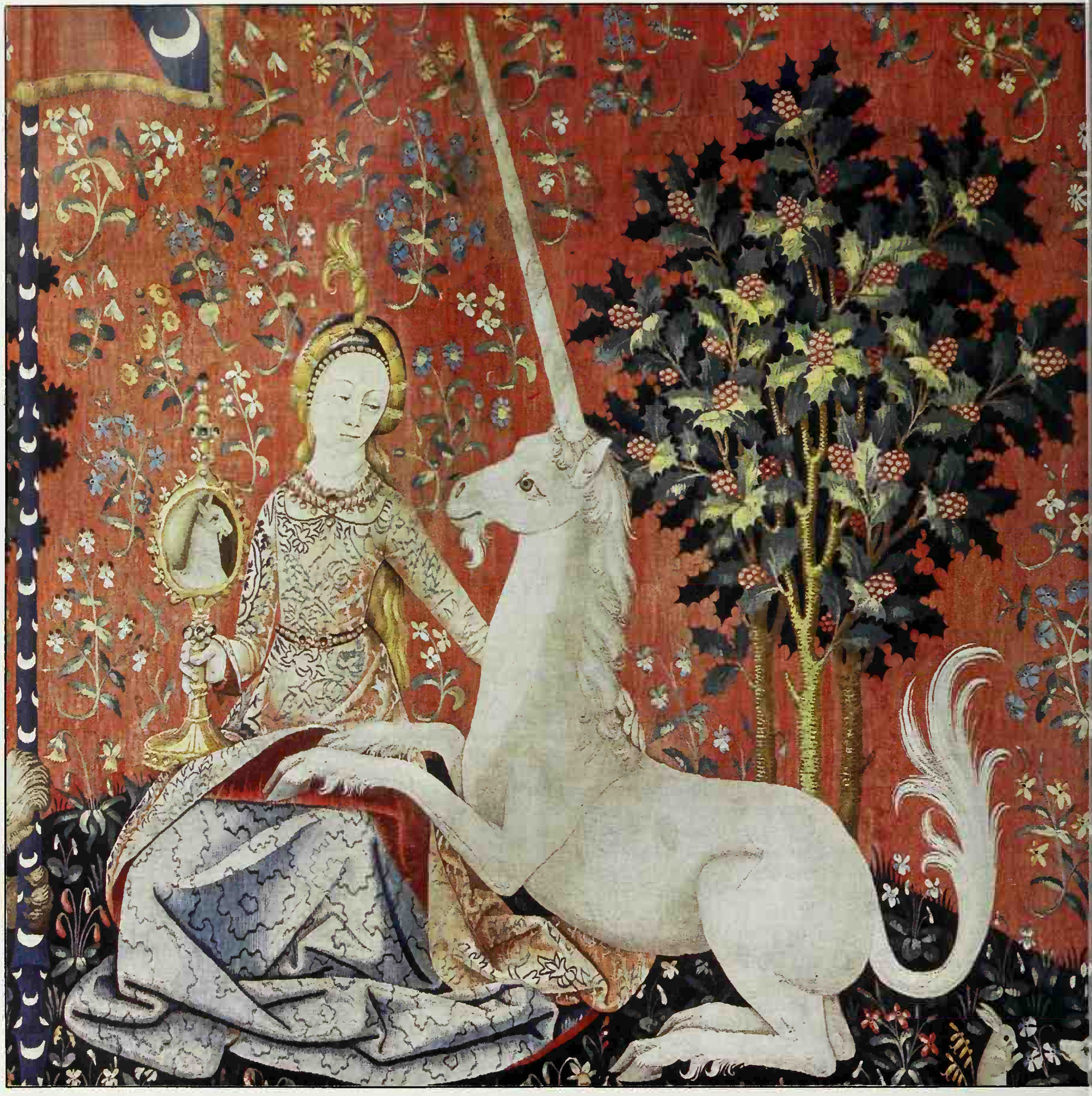


16th century French tapestry illustrating th belief that only a virgin holding a mirror ca tame a unicorn; the sexual symbolism, whic includes the flagstaff, the crescent mot on the flag, rabbits, holly berries and oa leaves, suggests that the tapestry depicts th traditions of courtly love

Born of misunderstood travellers' tales, nurtured by the error of biblical translators and adopted by the alchemists, the legend of the unicorn who combines male and female in one beast is rich in the symbolism of opposites

UNICORN

A FABULOUS BEAST born of man's imagination, the unicorn plays a leading role in some of his most ancient myths and legends. Its form and function are as variable as the minds and religions of men; but whatever its shape – and it has been described as an ox, ram, goat, bull, antelope, wild ass, horse, rhinoceros, serpent or fish, and as a monster in which the characteristics of several of these animals are combined – a one-horned beast was always a symbol of supreme power, connected with gods and kings. It concentrates into a single horn the vigour and virility associated with the two horns of real animals (see HORNS).

An early distinction was made between the caprine unicorn, a gigantic one-horned goat, and the equine unicorn, in the form of a horse. The latter, the unicorn *par excellence*, was gracefully adapted by the College of Heralds as a symbol of 'the very parfit gentil knight'.

The first to mention the unicorn in the West was Ctesias of Cnidos, a Greek historian and doctor who was court physician to the kings of Persia for some 17 years. A fragment of his book on India, written abou 398 BC, is the most important Wester document concerning the unicorn: 'Ther are in India,' wrote Ctesias, 'certain wil asses, which are as large as horses, an larger. Their bodies are white, their head dark red, and their eyes dark blue. The have a horn on the forehead which is abou a foot and a half in length. The dust file from this horn is administered in a potion a a protection against deadly drugs. The base of this horn is pure white, the upper part is sharp and of a vivid crimson; and the remainder or middle portion is black. Those who drink out of these horns made into drinking vessels are not subject, they say, to convulsions or the holy disease. Indeed they are immune even to poisons if, either before or after swallowing such, they drink wine, water, or anything else from these beakers . . .'

The Ctesian unicorn is a compound of three animals: rhinoceros, wild ass and a rare, fierce Himalayan antelope which, in profile, appears to have one horn. This confusion of the attributes of different animals, and the inability to distinguish between the artificial and the natural, is a perpetual stumbling-block in the complex history of the unicorn; but it was inevitable in a time when travellers' tales were the only sources of information. Ctesias had never seen a rhinoceros, but it is assumed that he saw a cup made from rhinoceros horn, which had been brought from India where these were commonly used as drinking vessels by potentates and princes, and often decorated with bands of colour – white, black and red. These are of course the colours in the horn of the Ctesian unicorn.

The Great Re'em

Aristotle (384–322 BC) mentions two kinds of unicorn, the Indian ass and the oryx, a kind of antelope that is single-horned in profile; and the Roman writers Pliny (23–79 AD) and Aelian (170–235 AD) between them muster seven different kinds, the most important being the rhinoceros, though, like Ctesias, neither realized they were describing that beast. Pliny emphasized the fact that unicorns could not be captured by men, and Aelian their love of solitude and their indomitability.

The most momentous thing that happened to the Western unicorn was a mistake. The Greek translators of the Old Testament rendered the word *Re'em* as *monoceros*, 'single-horned' or unicorn. This magnificent error conferred on the unicorn a lifespan far exceeding that of the rest of the mythical menagerie and lasting well into the 18th century. Through this mistranslation the unicorn became part of the Bible and to doubt its existence was to question the inspired word of God. The battle over the true identity of the Re'em was long and complex, but it was eventually identified as *bos primigenius*, the giant aurochs, a species of wild buffalo that was extinct in Mesopotamia by about 500 BC (see BULL).

Sir Austen Layard identified the aurochs with the superbly sculptured 'bulls of Nineveh', dating from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (6th century BC) which were seen by the Jews at the time of their captivity. The beasts are shown in conventional profile and therefore look single-horned. However, as Odell Shepard points out in *The Lore of the Unicorn*, there is little in the Hebrew text of the Bible to suggest that the Jews themselves thought of the Re'em as anything but two-horned, since the word for 'horn' is almost invariably in the plural.

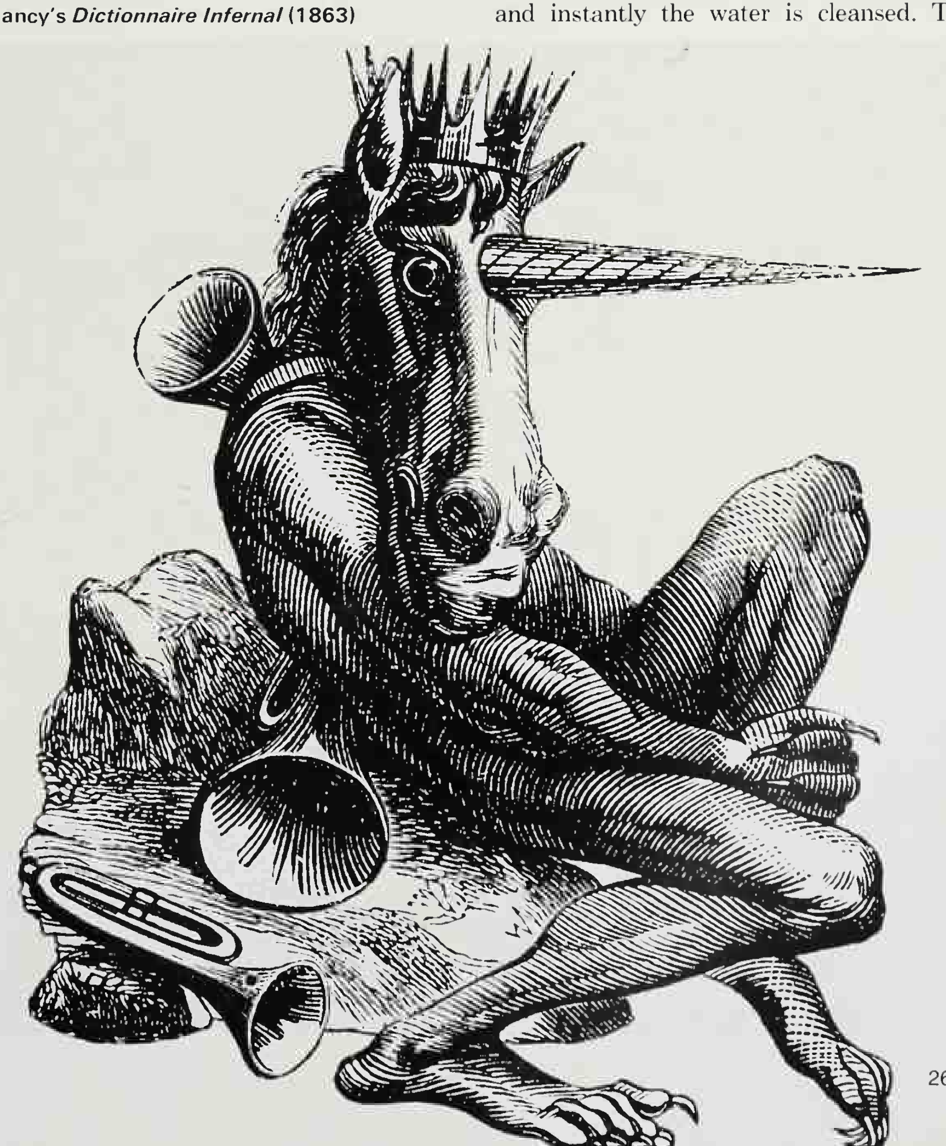
Later Jewish commentators exaggerated the Re'em out of all proportion. A young unicorn becomes as large as Mount Tabor and as high as the sky. Because it could not fit into Noah's ark, the unicorn had to be towed by a rope attached to its horn; and another tradition states that it perished in the waters. Talmudic texts link the unicorn firmly with the lion: 'And in our land there is also the unicorn, which has a great horn on its forehead. And there are also many lions. And when the lion sees a unicorn it draws him against a tree, and the horn pierces so deep into the tree it cannot pull it out again, and then the lion comes and kills the unicorn – but sometimes the matter is reversed . . .'

Bestiaries, collections of moral tales about real or fabulous animals, were very popular all through the Middle Ages. Texts varied according to local and religious influences, but all recounted the most famous of all legends about the unicorn – its capture by a virgin. According to this tale, the unicorn, a small kid-like beast armed with a sharp pointed horn, is too fleet and fierce to be taken by hunters. Only a virgin seated alone under a tree in a forest can capture it; because it is irresistibly attracted by the odours of virtue, the unicorn approaches the virgin, lays its head in her lap and permits itself to be caressed into sleep. She breaks its horn, the dogs leap, the huntsman pounces, and the unicorn is taken to the palace of the king.

Details vary, vividly, from text to text; in some the unicorn indulges in familiarities remarkably unsuited to virginal virtue, and in others the virgin is a boy in disguise. Although this legend, of unknown provenance, is transparently erotic, it was tortured into ill-fitting Christian significance. The treacherous virgin was identified with the Mother of God, and the unicorn with Christ and also, despite its dubious familiarities, with purity. The single horn was said to symbolize the unity of Father and Son, and also the 'horn' of the cross, the upright beam projecting above the transverse. The huntsman became the Holy Spirit acting through the angel Gabriel, and the king's palace was heaven. The dogs represented truth, justice, mercy and peace, despite the fact that their function was to tear the unicorn to pieces; they were said to couple at the beast's death, signifying that, though seemingly irreconcilable, truth, justice, mercy and peace were now one.

Another famous legend concerns the virtues of the alicorn, the beast's horn, as an antidote to poison. The animals gather at sunset to quench their thirst, and find the 'great water' poisoned with venom discharged by a serpent. Unable to drink, they await the unicorn. The beast approaches, makes the sign of the cross over the water with its horn and instantly the water is cleansed. The

A symbol of supreme power, a one-horned beast concentrates into its single horn the strength associated with animals that have two horns: the demon Amduscias, who commanded 29 legions, is depicted with a man's body and the head of a unicorn: illustration from Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal* (1863)



horn symbolizes the cross, the serpent the Devil, and the poisoned water stands for the sins of the world.

As a result of this legend, drinking cups made from horn were commonly found on the banqueting tables of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as a defence against death by poisoning, a common hazard besetting those in high places. The horn was said to sweat in the presence of poison. Alicorns, bought and sold at formidable prices, were rated among the most precious items of princely and papal treasure. For the rich there were cups made from alicorn or pieces of it; while for the poor there were scrapings of horn or *l'eau a la licorne*, water into which the horn had been dipped. Apothecaries kept an alicorn chained to their counters, for it was considered to be the most effective panacea for a variety of evils; finally, it was claimed to raise the dead.

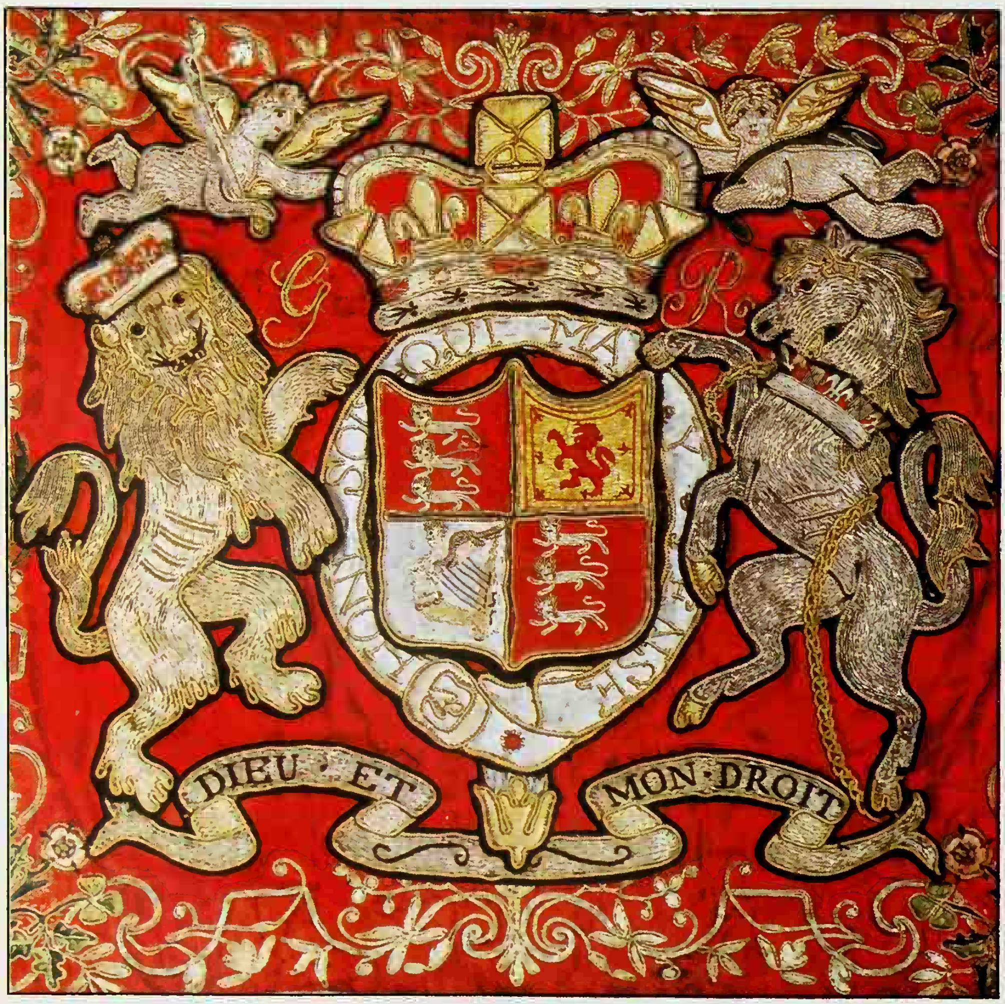
A veritable library of learning has been built up in search of the beast providing the 'true alicorn', and it is sad to reduce that quarry of forgotten lore to a brief citation of the main providers: rhinoceros, antelope, mammoth tusk, and the tusk of narwhal, a marine mammal. Practically all the pictures in ancient books show a horn based on the last of these. By 1600 Europe boasted at least 19 famous alicorns.

Unicorns held a high place in the religion and sacred writing of Persia: '. . . the three-legged ass . . . stands amid the wide-formed ocean . . . its feet are three, eyes six, mouths nine, ears two, and horn one. Body white, food spiritual and it is righteous . . . The horn is as it were of pure gold and hollow . . . With that horn it will vanquish and dissipate all the vile corruption due to the efforts of noxious creatures . . .' However, the one-horned ass is frequently thought to have been imported from an older culture; it is thought that the one-horned beast that haunts the high snows of the Himalayas has the most ancient tradition, and many authorities cite Tibet as the most likely source of unicorn legends, though there was a time when the Mountains of the Moon, heaving high over Ethiopia, held pride of place. The tradition was long and strong, and four brazen unicorns dominated the court of the Ethiopian kings.

In Tibet, antelope horns were used for magical and ritual purposes for centuries, particularly the horn of a fierce fleet antelope known as *Anthlops Hodgsoni*, named for a 19th century British resident of Nepal who identified its horn. In profile, the beast looks single-horned. The unicorn is frequently depicted in the paintings and sculptures of Buddhist temples; the circle containing the body of a dead lama was drawn with the horn of the sacred antelope. From Tibet the unicorn is assumed to have spread into China.

The Chinese unicorn does not have the fierceness of its counterpart further west; it is so gentle that it will not tread on so much as a blade of grass, and its backwar sweeping horn is fleshy-tipped, indicatin that it was not used for attack. Called th *ki-lin*, the Chinese unicorn was believed t appear at the start of a beneficent reign c the birth of a man equal to an emperor i stature; traditionally it announced the birt and death of Confucius. But there is mor to the unicorn than that. The 'key' to th beast lies hidden in its Chinese name, *k* 'male', *lin*, 'female'.

The lion and the unicorn, which have long been associated together in legend and heraldry, are the supporters of the shield in the English royal coat of arms



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The unicorn's most vital function ha been as a symbol, whether of power o virility, or purity, or the combination c opposites, of the male horn and the femal body. Many modern interpreters regar this last role as the crucial one and relat it to the symbolism of the soul as the spar of divine light in the darkness of matter an evil, the body, and to the concept of th hermaphrodite as the perfect union of opposites (see OPPOSITES).

This explains the unicorn's place in th symbolism of alchemy. The 'great work' o alchemy was an attempt to liberate th divine spirit of light from its prison of darkness by transforming base metal into gol by means of the Philosophers' Stone, and b transforming the alchemist himself into th psychic equivalent of gold, a being who wa spiritually purified, who had liberated th god within himself. Mercury, the 'male female', the androgyne, was an essentia element in the work, and the personificatio of Mercury as the precursor of triumph proclaiming victory over darkness was th unicorn. (See also ALCHEMY; MERCURY PHILOSOPHERS' STONE.)

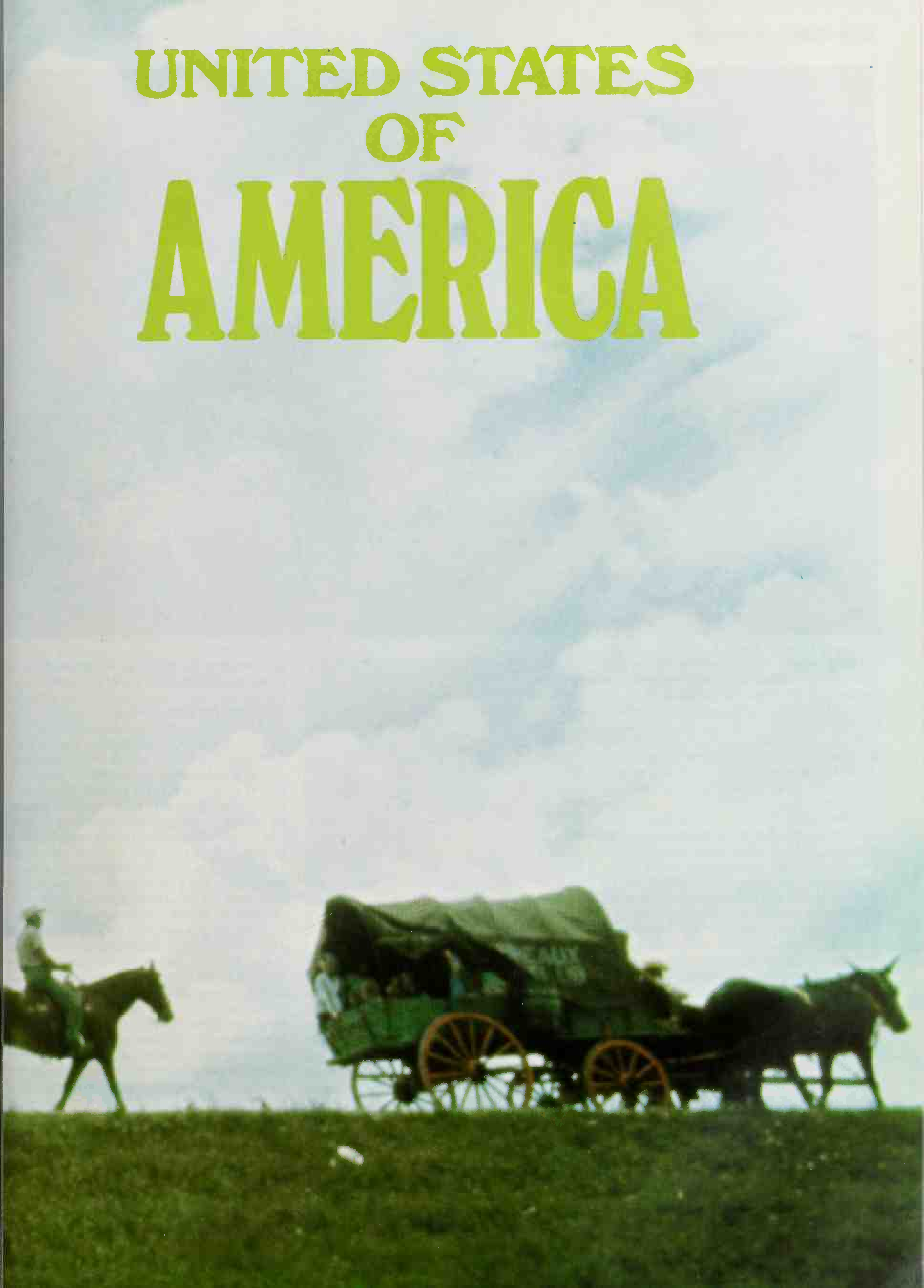
The moment for which every alchemis laboured is illustrated in *The Book of Lamb sprinck* (1625) by a picture which shows a deer and a unicorn meeting in a forest, wit the text: 'In the forest (body) there is a soul (deer) and spirit (unicorn) . . . He tha knows how to tame and master them by art and couple them together, may justly b called a master, for we judge rightly that h has obtained the golden flesh.' Another o the many symbols of Mercury as androgynous god and precursor to triumph was th green lion wounded in the lap of the virgin Because both were figures for Mercury green lion and unicorn were often considere one, and certainly the image echoes wit familiar resonances for those acquainte with the legend of the 'virgin capture'.

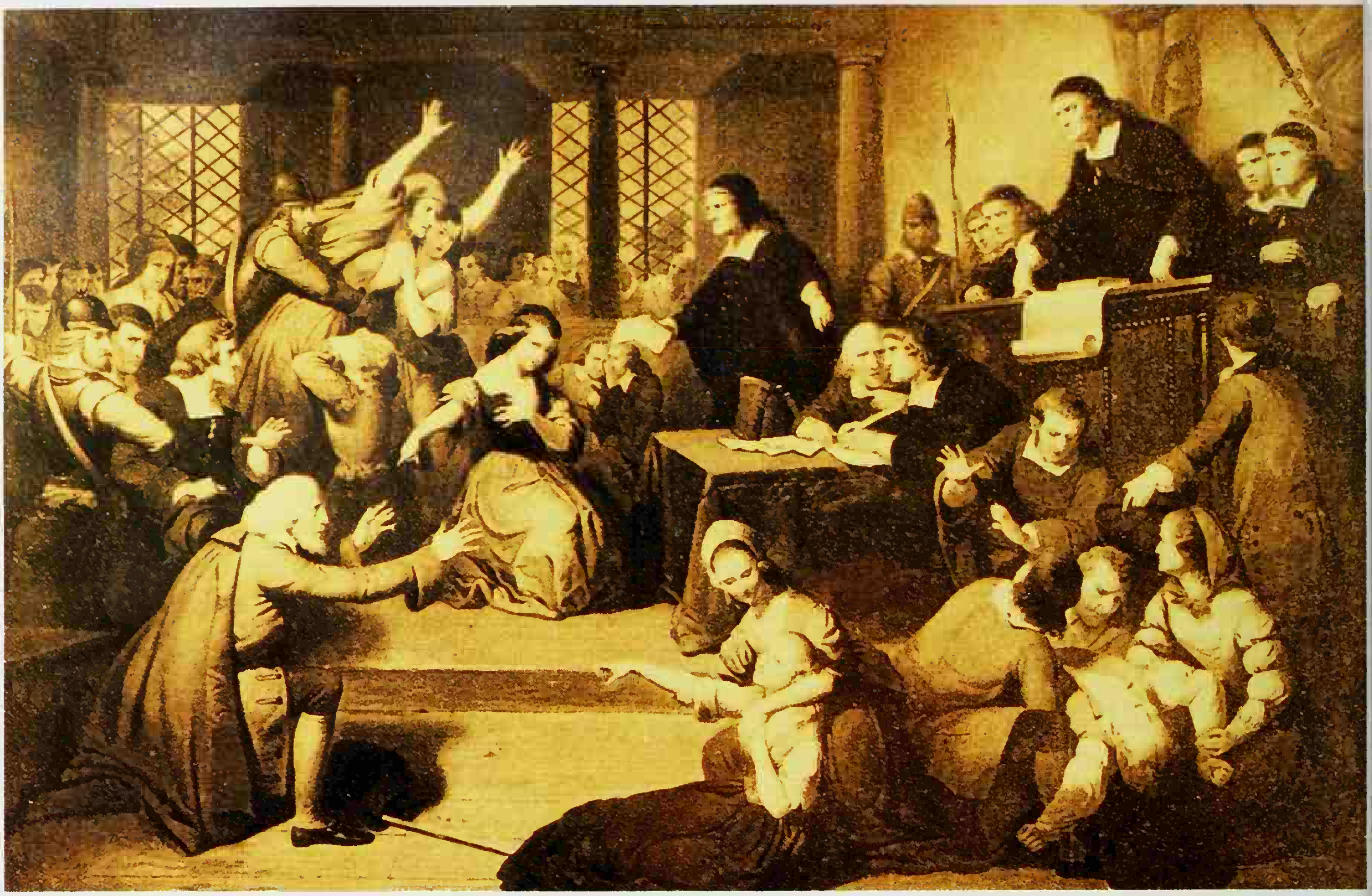
The French scientist, Baron Cuvie (1769–1832) dealt the final blow to man's belief in unicorns as an actual species whe he declared that beasts with cloven hooves had cloven skulls, and that no horn coul grow in the cleft. Although Dr Dove, an American biologist, proved Cuvier wrong in 1933 when he transplanted the horn buds of an Ayrshire calf into its skull cleft, and produced a synthetic unicorn, this did nothing to resurrect belief in the beast.

JUNE GRIMBLE

FURTHER READING: N. Hathaway, *The Unicorn* (Viking, 1980); P. and K. Johnsgard *Dragons and Unicorns* (St Martin's, 1982) Odell Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn* (Harper and Row 1979 reprint); M. Walser *The Unicorn* (Marion Boyars/Scribner 1983).

UNITED STATES
OF
AMERICA





White American folkore continues to develop, with contemporary tales and superstitions emerging from the mainstream of pioneer and frontier tradition, which itself had its roots in the Old World

AS EUROPEAN SETTLERS began crossing the Atlantic, every successive wave of incomers to the New World took with them to their new homes their entire ideological baggage, including their religious beliefs, myths, customs, fears and superstitions, their familiar festivals, games, tales and songs. Folklore from every country in Europe found a new home in North America, taken there by Britons, Irish, French, Italians, Germans, Scandinavians, Jews and other nationals. There these European traditions entered a melting pot in which they mingled with each other, and with influences from Africa and Latin America, to combine in rich new motifs.

The theocracy which ruled the New England colonies in the early days, for instance, was in no doubt that, along with the godly, witches and servants of Satan had sneaked their way on board the pilgrim ships across the Atlantic. Persecution of suspected witches in America never remotely approached the European scale, but fear of witchcraft was part of the emotional background of the early immigrants and the first witch to be executed, a woman named Alse Young, was hanged in Connecticut in 1647.

Mishaps and misfortunes were readily ascribed to witchcraft and the usual neighbourhood tensions produced accusations. A woman of Charlestown, Mary Jones, was executed in 1648, mainly because 'after some angry words passing between her and her neighbours, some mischief befel such neighbours...'

Another typical case occurred in Hartford, Connecticut, when a young woman named Anne Cole was seized with fits in which she talked gibberish and a language that sounded like Dutch, which she did not know. She raved about persons she suspected of having 'mischievous designs' against her and implicated a woman known as Mother Greensmith, who was already suspected of being a witch.

Confronted with the accusation, Mother Greensmith confessed to 'familiarity with the Devil', whom she had first encountered in the form of a deer or a fawn. 'Moreover she said that the Devil had frequently the carnal knowledge of her body; and that the witches had meetings at a place not far from her house; and that some appeared in one shape, and others in another; and one came flying amongst them in the shape of a crow.' After Mother Greensmith was executed, in 1662, Anne Cole had no more fits.

Two celebrated Puritan ministers, Increase Mather and his son Cotton, were firm believers in the malevolent power of the Devil and his fifth column of human sympathisers. They helped to stir up popular feeling against supposed witches, though Cotton Mather had misgivings about some of the evidence in the trials at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, the most notorious outbreak of witch persecution in American history (see SALEM WITCHES).

Shooting the New Year In

Further south, belief in witchcraft and sorcery persisted among the (so-called) Pennsylvania Dutch, whose distinctive identity was principally a mixture of German, Swiss and French Huguenot strains. A cow's milk drying up, or any similar farming misfortune, was generally put down to hostile witchcraft, and the farmer would go to a known witch and pay to have the spell removed. Fear of malevolent *hexerei*, or magic, was still alive after the Second World War, and the handsome barns of the Amish farmers in Pennsylvania keep their traditional hex-signs, symbols for warding off the evil eye and hostile supernatural influences.

Until very recent times, among the Pennsylvania Dutch, when someone fell ill and orthodox medical treatment failed to produce a cure, a specialist 'powwow doctor' would be called in to bring traditional treatment into play. All sorts of tried and trusted folk cures were used at home as a matter of course: swallowing seven small pieces of ice for hiccoughs, for instance, or putting a key on the back of the neck to stop a nosebleed.

Much traditional lore clustered round the Christmas and Easter celebrations. The animals in the Pennsylvania barns talked at midnight on Christmas Eve, as their counterparts did in Europe, while naughty children might find bits of coal in their Christmas stockings, put there silently in the night by a being called Belzknickle.

Eggs were painted at Easter and an egg-tree made by hanging coloured eggs from the branches. There were many stories of ghosts and spectral dogs.

Germans from Pennsylvania moved south into North Carolina in the 18th century, taking with them a custom known as shooting in the New Year. A group of young men with guns would make the rounds of the houses during New Year's Eve, stopping at each house to call a friendly wish and fire a volley. They would be invited in for refreshments before going on to the next house, giving up only with the dawn. As late as the 1960s the elderly New Year's Shooters in the small town of Cherryville were still driving round in their cars and saluting their neighbours on New Year's Eve by firing off ancient muskets loaded with black powder.

Wild and Woolly

Further south again, traditional lore flourished in another distinctive local culture among the Ozark Hills on the border of Arkansas and Missouri. This isolated backwoods area, cut off from mainstream America, is the home of the 'hillbillies' richly celebrated in Al Capp's Li'l Abner stories. All sorts of elements brought here by the original British settlers blended and sprouted in forms rich and strange – tales of witches and weird monsters, and of the Devil prowling the hills, recognizable by his cloven foot or his lack of a shadow.

Life in the Ozarks was hedged about with superstitious and protective rules to ward off bad luck – never to lend or borrow salt, never to keep a rifle under the bed, never to whistle in the privy. Folk remedies were handed down from each generation to the next and the local 'power doctors', or specialists in the supernatural, included herbal medicine practitioners and dowsers (see OZARKS).

Further south still, in Louisiana where French and French Canadian influence was strong, a distinctive 'Cajun' culture emerged with its own cuisine, music, customs and folkways, which include traditional French children's games and dances. The wildly spectacular Mardi Gras festival in New Orleans was introduced originally by French settlers (see SPRING).

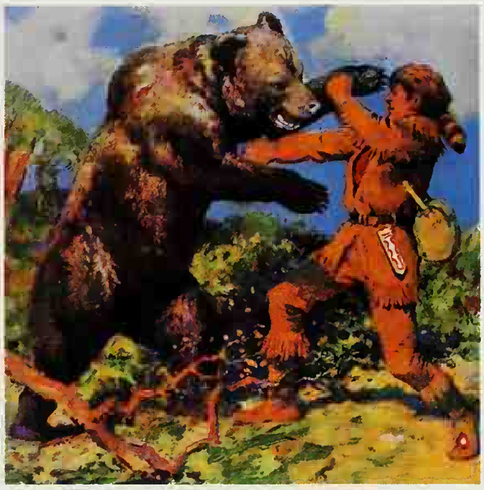
The Little People

Irish emigrants carried their fairy-lore with them and the 'little people' were transplanted to a new milieu in America. In New York they were reported to stand between one and two feet tall and wear white clothes with red caps. A lady in Ohio in 1894 recalled as a child peeping into tulips and lilies in the expectation of finding fairies inside.

Southern Illinois, which was settled originally by Scottish-Irish immigrants, acquired the nickname Egypt, and lively beliefs in witches and ghosts survived at least until the late 1930s. There were spectral dogs and cats which might or might not have heads. Ghosts might alarmingly assume the forms of innocent laundry-bags or bolsters. They might tap on windows or make the sound of chains dragging on the floor.

Images Colour Library

Successive waves of European settlers in the US brought their folk beliefs and superstitions with them *Facing page* English colonists were in no doubt that witches had sneaked their way aboard the pilgrim ships: trial of George Jacobs for witchcraft at Salem in 1692, a mezzotint after T.H.Matteson's painting in the Essex Institute, Salem *Above* The New Orleans Mardi Gras was introduced by French settlers *Below* One of the first heroes of the new American mythology: Davy Crockett wrestles with a bear


Peter Newark's American Pictures

A Dubiety of Owls

Spanish and Mexican influences were powerful in Texas and the southwestern states, lying behind fears of witches and sorcerers who could take animal form. Texans of Mexican descent kept a cautious eye on owls, which might be witches in disguise. In 1908, near Harlingen, a group of men working in the fields were joined by a stranger who suffered from a curious affliction that caused him to vomit blood on Thursdays and Fridays. It was generally agreed that he was bewitched and, to cure him, twelve knots were solemnly tied in a horsehair rope. Just as the twelfth knot was tied, two big owls tumbled out of a nearby mesquite tree. They were promptly beaten to death and the men claimed they heard voices while killing the owls. The stranger's clothes were then burned on a fire and he was free of his mysterious affliction.

The magic of knots and owls reappears in North Carolina. 'To make a hoot owl stop hollering, take a string and tie a knot in it and the owl will quit hollering.' Another traditional prescription is, 'If you would prevent a cat leaving its new home, clip the hairs from the end of its tail and bury them under the doorstep.'

The traditional Texas lore of love and marriage recommends sleeping with mistletoe or a piece of wedding cake under your pillow to see the one you will marry. 'To find out if your sweeetheart loves you, strike a match and let it burn as long as it will. If it burns up without breaking into two pieces, your sweetheart loves you.' You should never sweep under a girl's feet, incidentally, because if you do she can never get married.

Weird and Wonderful

Part of traditional cracker-barrel entertainment in the rural United States, in country stores and saloons and barber shops, was the telling of enjoyably lurid tall tales of mythical creatures like the gillygloo bird of the Ozarks, which flew backwards and upside down. These tales were a reaction to the vast unknown territory that confronted the early settlers. Peopling it with ludicrously exaggerated monsters recognized its huge, chaotic potential and at the same time made it safely laughable. A general favourite was the hoop snake, which rolled itself into a hoop with its tail in its mouth and whirled after a victim at appalling speed until it could poison him with a stinger at the end of its tail. Another creature of legend was the mountain sidewinder, which fed on the mountain slopes and had a pair of legs on one side of its body longer than the pair on the other.

A minister named Samuel Peters wrote a *General History of Connecticut* in 1781, in which he described various peculiar creatures of popular lore. One was the humility bird, which was about the size of a blackbird, had black, white, red and blue plumage with a piercing eye, and flew so fast it could never be shot, for the bird would see the spark even before it fired the powder in the gun and would be out of range in an instant.

King of the Wild Frontier

Another similarly enjoyable genre in frontier days embraced tall tales about human folk heroes, some of whom were real people credited with superhuman attributes. Davy Crockett, for instance, was real enough – a Tennessee backwoodsman, hunter and Indian fighter at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, who served in Congress and was killed at the Alamo in 1836. His exploits, his courage, his salty speech and homespun humour caught the imagination of the tellers of tall tales and the writers of early pulp fiction. They turned him into a rip-roaring giant in a coonskin cap, an irrepressible prankster and wag, who performed impossible feats in the backwoods wilderness with boon companions like Mike Fink. One cold day in January, for instance, so cold that the earth froze on its axis and the rising sun was stuck between two lumps of ice, Crockett unfroze them with hot juice he squeezed from a massive bear he caught on the road. Then he shouldered the bear's carcass, put a piece of the sunrise in his pocket and took it home to cook himself bear steaks for breakfast.

Davy Crockett combined preternatural size and strength with a native shrewdness and resilience that owed nothing to book-learning, but made him master of the untamed wilderness. Even Crockett was outdone in 'orneriness' and 'helliferociousness' by Mike Fink, the rumbustious riverman hero, who was also a real figure, born in 1770. A crack shot, Indian fighter, frontier scout and river boatman, he became a legendary hero who stood for the tough, intrepid rivermen, pirates, rascals and daredevils of the Ohio and the Mississippi before the coming of the steamboats. In 1822 he travelled north up the Missouri to go fur-trapping and at Fort Henry, enjoying the sport of shooting a tin cup off another man's head in William Tell style, he missed and shot his friend dead. He was soon afterwards shot dead himself in revenge.

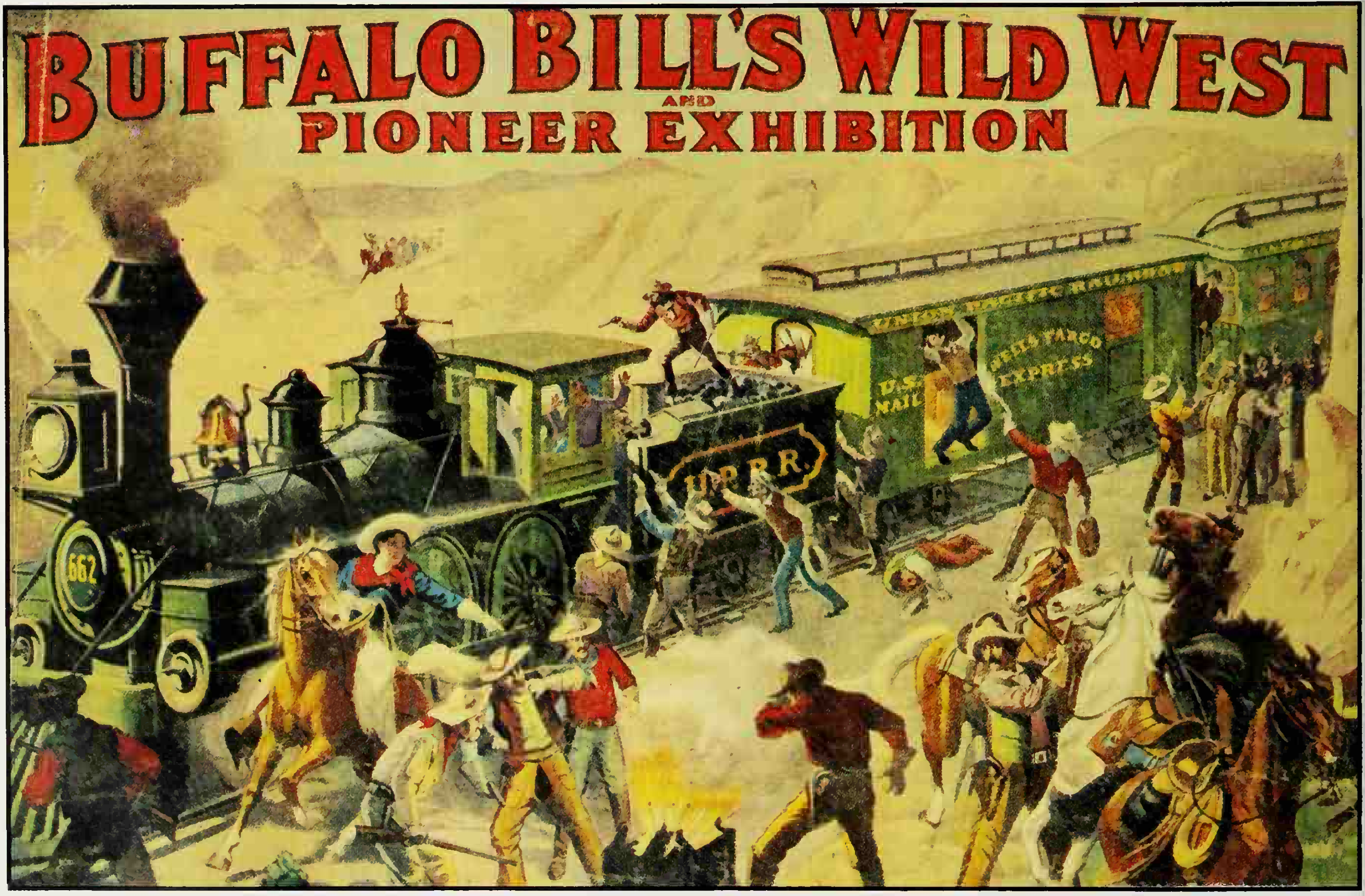
Tall tales clustered around other notable frontiersmen, like Daniel Boone, the Indian fighter who explored the Kentucky area in the 1770s, and Kit Carson, the famous Missouri trapper and scout who helped to open up the far West. The stories were told for fun, but they also gave a satisfyingly superhuman quality to the heroes who tamed the wilderness and pushed the frontier ever westwards. Stock tales of marvels went the rounds, too, like the one about the hunter who killed an astonishing number and variety of animals with one shot as a result of a string of wildly improbable ricochets and coincidences. The untamed frontier, beyond the pale of civilization, was the place where anything might happen.

There's a different flavour to the legend of Johnny Appleseed, whose real name was John Chapman. From the 1790s on, he travelled from Massachusetts to the Middle West, planting apple trees and amiably distributing the works of Swedenborg, before his death in 1845. In story he turned into an American equivalent of St Francis of Assisi, a benevolent tramp-cum-hermit, who loved all living creatures so much that he would put out a campfire sooner than let mosquitoes burn themselves in the flames, and sleep in the snow rather than eject a mother bear and her cubs from a hollow log.

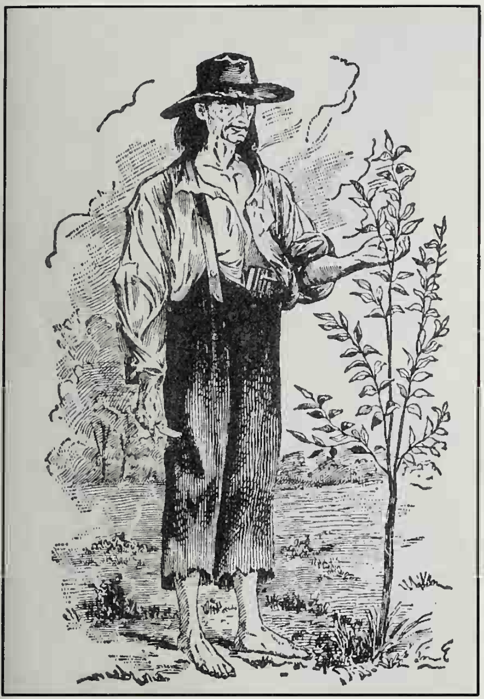
When There Were Giants

Frontier heroes still have a larger-than-life quality about them as we look back today, and new heroic tales grew up as the railroads drove their way across the West. Casey Jones, for instance, of the famous song, was John Luther Jones, engineer of the Illinois Central's celebrated 'Cannonball' express. Killed in a train wreck in 1900, he was found in his engine with one hand on the whistle and the other on the brake lever.

The American black hero of song, John Henry, who died with his hammer in his hand pitting his gigantic strength against a steam-drill, man against machine, was actually killed in a cave-in when the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad was being



Poster advertising Buffalo Bill Cody's 'Wild West and Pioneer Exhibition'; a brilliantly successful showman, he brought the legendary Wild West of cowboys and Indians, Wells Fargo and the train holdup, to life



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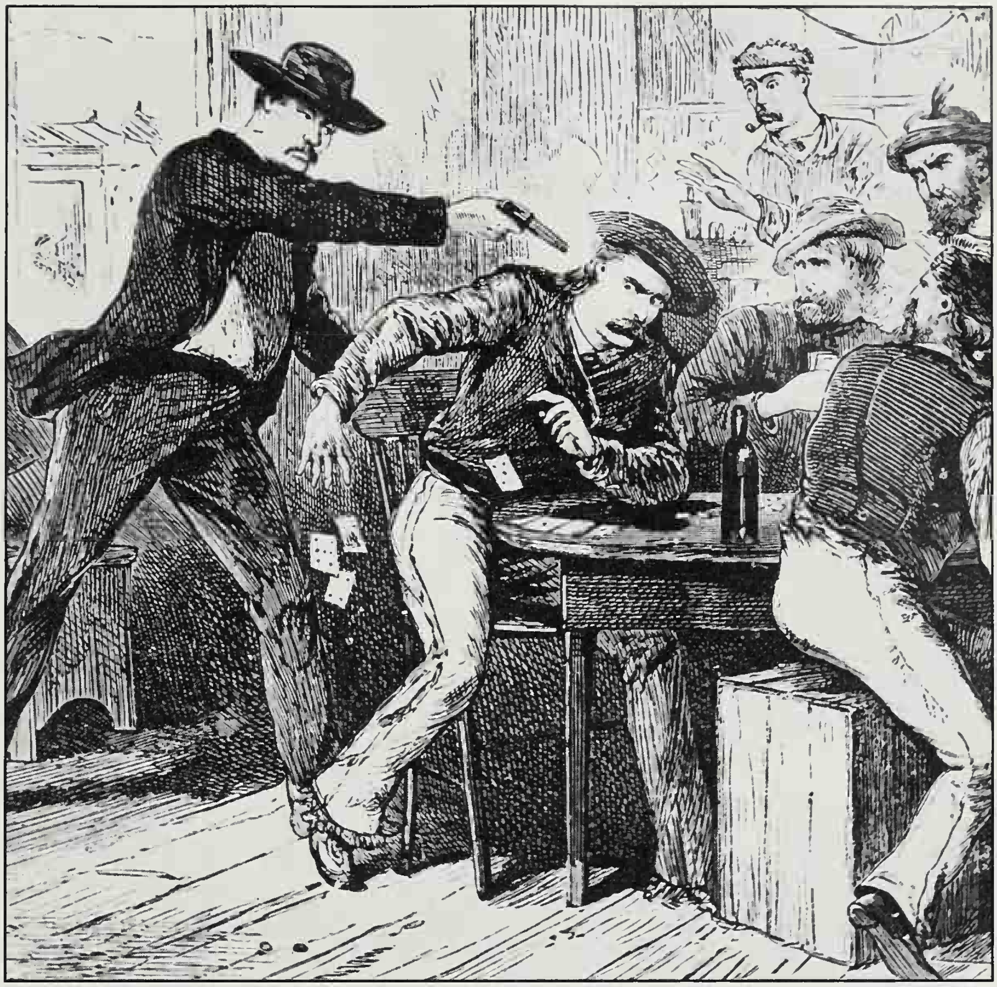

Peter Newark's American Pictures

Along the expanding frontier, many real-life characters assumed legendary proportions *Right* The assassination of 'Wild Bill' Hickok by Jack McCall in Deadwood, 2 August 1876; unfortunately, the artist has not captured the 'dead man's hand' of two aces and two eights held in a poker game by Hickok at the moment of his death *Above* A very different character, 'Johnny Appleseed', who roamed the Midwest planting apple trees for nearly fifty years

driven through the hills in West Virginia in the 1870s. Some versions of the legend turned him into a white man and one ballad gives him a woman companion named Mary Magdalene.

The lumberjacks and logging camps had their own hero, another strong man of giant proportions and titanic strength, Paul Bunyan, who has been described as 'the patron saint of the American lumber industry'. He may have had a real-life original, but he was fundamentally a creation of journalists and publicists for the Red River Lumber Company of Minnesota in the early years of this century, building on French, Irish, Scandinavian and American Indian motifs and the general frontier 'tall tale' tradition. Paul Bunyan stories were still being made up in the 1920s.

'We Shall Overcome'

Industrialization transferred heroes of this kind to the factories and mills. The Pennsylvania steel hero Joe Magarac, a Slav like many of the workers in the industry, was so strong that he worked day and night in the mill, squeezing hot steel through his fingers to make rails. The biggest man ever seen, above seven feet tall, he had a back bigger than a door, hands as large as two men's together, a neck like a bull and arms as big as an ordinary man's waist. Joe Magarac was not only the steelworker writ large, he was steel personified. He was born in an ore mountain, his body was made of steel and at the end of his life, when he heard that the boss wanted to make the best steel in the world, he sat down in the molten steel until he melted with it, and was poured into the moulds as the finest steel there could ever be.

Joe Magarac giving his life for fine steel could readily be interpreted as a symbol of the workers' exploitation by the bosses. The mythology of heroic labour was taken up in the 1930s by the trades unions, which saw its usefulness in inspiring and supporting strikes and industrial action. It was workers in tobacco factories who first began to sing the hymn 'We Shall Overcome' as a rallying song, which readied it for yet another role subsequently as the anthem of the civil rights movement.

The Dead Man's Hand

An invented Western hero of herculean strength was Pecos Bill, the cowboy who was raised among the coyotes and did not realize he was human until he grew up. In the Davy Crockett tradition, he hugged grizzly bears to death, lassoed gila monsters, using a rattlesnake for a lariat, and rode an Oklahoma cyclone bareback. He finally succumbed to his habit of lacing his drinks with fish-hooks and barbed wire.

Pecos Bill was invented by a magazine writer and has been classified as 'fakelore' rather than true folklore, but his exploits answered the same needs as stories which emerged anonymously from the 'folk'. Heroic status and legendary exploits attached themselves to real figures of the Wild West, too, like 'Wild Bill' Hickok, the lawman and gun-fighter who was turned into a chivalrous knight errant by romanticizing journalists for an eager public on the American east coast.

One of them, beside himself with excitement at meeting the great man, described his 'quiet, manly face; so gentle in its expression as he greets you as utterly to belie the history of its owner, yet it is not a face to be trifled with.' The eyes, he says, are as gentle as those of a woman. 'In truth, the woman nature seems prominent throughout, and you would not believe that you were looking into eyes that have pointed the way to death to hundreds of men. Yes, Wild Bill with his own hands has killed hundreds of men. Of that I have no doubt. "He shoots to kill," as they say on the border.'

Hickok's death in 1876, shot while playing poker in a saloon in Deadwood, (now South Dakota), was treated by the journalists like the passing of a Siegfried or a Cuchulain and the final poker hand he held, two pairs, aces and eights, has been known ever since as 'the dead man's hand'.

The same romanticizing process was applied to criminals like Billy the Kid and Jesse James. Billy the Kid was a vicious psychopath in real life, involved in cattle wars in New Mexico, but in legend he took on the guise of a Robin Hood, an outlaw and rebel whose defiance of authority struck a blow for the common people. When he was shot and killed in 1881, he was 21 years old and, according to his biographer, 'had killed 21 men, not including Indians, which he said didn't count as human beings.'

Jesse James, according to the ballad, stole from the rich and gave to the poor in

$500
REWARD
the Arrest and
Conviction of
JESSE JAMES
St. Louis

The modern myth of the Wild West has been created largely by the cinema and television, and the true folklore of the cowboy has been overwhelmed by the 'fakelore' of the gunfight and the chase: John Wayne *(far left)* epitomizes the tough lawman to filmgoers all over the world; Butch Cassidy (seated right in the top group in this montage) is one of many outlaws who have been romanticized as devil-may-care rebels, while Wyatt Earp (third from the right in the bottom group) is one of the few lawmen who have been immortalized. The Apache Indian *(left)* is a stock figure in Western films. *Top* Poster offering a reward for the capture of Jesse James; a murderer and robber, he and Billy the Kid *(above)* were both transmuted into 'good criminals', popular figures in modern American folklore

Pen on Tour

approved Robin Hood style. 'Jesse was a man, a friend to the poor, he'd never see a man suffer pain.' In story he saved a black boy from a mob, piously declined to rob a preacher and gave a poor widow the money to pay her mortgage – promptly recovering it by robbing the mortgage-holder. In cold reality he was a Missouri bad-man, a murderer and robber of banks and trains, who gave not to the poor but to himself and was finally shot dead for the price on his head by one of his own gang in 1882.

The prestige of the Wild West's glamorous figures was augmented by journalists and hack authors who penned pulp thrillers, newspaper and magazine articles, and stories in farming almanacs, through which the heroes and their exploits lived on in the popular culture. With the coming of moving pictures, the Hollywood studios took up the role and the myth and legend of the West became familiar not just in North America but to the world at large. Actors like John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, directors like John Ford, gave larger-than-life status to Western roles and themes, and brought a powerful new heroic mythology and frontier values to an enthralled mass audience.

The heroes of this century's comic books and animated cartoons, from Superman to Bugs Bunny, have in them much of the flavour, the preternatural powers, the whackiness and wild slapstick of the frontier heroes of the American past. Heroic stature and sometimes heroic myths cling to other great figures of the entertainment world. Elvis Presley was 'the King' and the shock when he died comparatively young was such that some of his devotees refused to accept it and believed that, like King Arthur or Frederick Barbarossa of yore, he was still alive and well and living somewhere else. The same tale was told of Jesse James.

Yankee Trickster and Little Audrey

Trickster stories, which are known in many parts of the world, have their own genre in North America in the 'clever Yankee' tales, based on the smart Yankee peddler or traveller who cheats and outwits the slow backwoodsman. A typical example recorded in California in the 1850s tells of a Yankee in a gambling saloon who claimed to have a toad that would outleap any rival matched against him. Eventually he was challenged by a man with a large frog, which twice outjumped the toad. The Yankee paid up with a bad grace and next morning he waged a substantial sum on his toad and won, as the frog could hardly jump at all. 'My frog is darn heavy this morning,' said the other man ruefully. 'I reckoned he would be,' the laconic Yankee said, 'for I rolled a pound of shot into him last night.'

At the other extreme from the clever Yankee is the dunderhead, like Dumb Dora in the 1920s – so stupid she thought Rudy Vallee was a place between two hills. In the 1930s and 1940s there was Little Moron, succeeded by Little Audrey, who 'just laughed and laughed'. When Little Audrey was stewed in a pot by cannibals, she just laughed and laughed because there were 19 cannibals and she knew she wouldn't make enough to go round. When Little Audrey did a parachute jump from a plane and a crowd was watching below, she looked down at them and laughed and laughed; she knew she was going to fool the people because she didn't have her parachute on.

Music and Play

Immigrants to the New World took their traditional music with them, and when the British folklorist Cecil Sharp visited the Southern Appalachians in search of English folksongs, he found rich pickings. Songs from the Old World, played on fiddles and banjos, were carried through New England and on into the backwoods to create 'country and western' music, with its Mecca ultimately in Nashville, Tennessee. Country dancing moved west with the pioneers in barn dances and hoe-downs. White America took up the blues, spirituals, ragtime and jazz from blacks in the South and vigorous new American traditions of popular music, religious and secular, black and white, developed and spread from the United States to the rest of the world.

Children's games also crossed the Atlantic and American children could be heard singing 'London Bridge is falling down' and chanting 'Rain, rain, go away' or 'Lady bug, lady bug, fly away home' as naturally as children in England. Here again, old wine was poured into new bottles as time went by. In the game 'Here Comes Three Dukes A-Roving', for example, the 'dukes' changed into 'ducks' in America, where dukes were not part of the social scenery. Wartime skipping or ball-bouncing rhymes in New York City included: 'Eeny meeny Mussolini, hit him on the bumble beany' and 'Eeny, meeny, miny, mo, catch a Jap by his toe, if he hollers, make him say, "I surrender, USA".'

By the 1980s children in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, had adopted Ronald McDonald, the clown in the commercials for the McDonald's Hamburger restaurants, for a clapping and finger-snapping rhyme which went: 'Ronald McDonald, a biscuit oh McDonald, a biscuit oh she wah wah, a biscuit I got a boyfriend...' As with movies, jazz and popular music, children's lore has moved across the Atlantic in the reverse direction, too. The 'trick or treat' custom at Hallowe'en, now firmly established in Britain, is an example.

'He Loves Me...'

Much of the old rural lore established in America by the 19th century began to fade away as improved transport and communications – trains, cars, airplanes, radio, television – bridged the physical and ideological distances between communities, took the place of home-grown entertainment and created a more homogeneous culture. It was not a rapid process, however, and country people who moved to the industrial cities did not leave their traditions behind.

After the Second World War, for example, there was massive emigration from the Southern Appalachians into Detroit, America's automobile capital. To the dismay of the city's medical practitioners, the newcomers took along their homespun traditional remedies, their distrust of orthodox doctors and hospitals, their fatalistic attitude to illness and death, and their preference for the ministrations of their own country 'thrash doctors'.

The new inventions of the machine age developed a lore of their own as stories and superstitions, once attached to horses and buggies, were transferred to trains, cars and planes. The spectral carriage with its ghostly steeds and driver could become the ghost train. After the assassination of President Lincoln, his coffin was taken by a special train from Washington DC to Springfield, the president's home town in Illinois, where he was buried. All across the country thousands of people came to stand by the track and watch the black-draped train pass, and at each station the train stopped for exactly eight minutes to allow the citizens to pay their respects. The mournful occasion made a strong impression and the legend grew up that every year a phantom of the train repeated the same journey, while along the route as it passed silently by the clocks stopped – for eight minutes precisely.

Horses have been replaced by automobiles in a complicated method for a girl to find the man she will marry. She has to count one hundred red convertibles, then look for a red-haired woman in a purple dress and a man with a green tie. The first boy to speak to her after this is her future husband. Meanwhile, instead of chanting 'he loves me, he loves me not' to the falling of petals, the 1950s American miss twisted a drinking straw round her fingers while reciting, 'He loves me, he don't, he'll marry me, he won't, he would if he could, he could if he would, but he won't.' The point in the chant she reached when she came to the end of the straw supplied the answer.

Truck drivers crossing the prairies at night, rumbling across the Dakotas or Nebraska, sometimes report having seen phantom wagon trains or ghostly pony express riders in the gleam of their headlights, spectral glimpses of the old West apparently imprinted on the atmosphere. Contrariwise, there are also reports of ghostly truckers, Flying Dutchmen of the highway, who roll on night after night in their huge rigs, unable to find release.

The well-known story of the vanishing hitch-hiker, who thumbs a lift on a lonely road and turns out to be a ghost, is one of a whole genre of modern folktales which go the rounds and are accepted as true – like the one about the alligators in the New York City sewers. Nowadays called urban, or contemporary, legends, they testify to the fact that folklore is alive and well and living in the United States (see URBAN LEGENDS). (For Black American traditions, see AFRO-AMERICAN LORE.)

RICHARD CAVENDISH

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The rain that fertilizes the earth is sometimes represented as the seed of the Greek god Uranus, whose name means sky or heaven; in astrology the planet called after him is a harbinger of violence, revolution and upheaval

URANUS

URANUS is the Greek name for sky or heaven, whether as a common noun or personified as a god. In the earliest Greek literature the sky is imagined as a solid roof to the world, made of bronze or iron and garlanded with stars. (For the ancients there was nothing humdrum about metal; it comes from the womb of earth, and there is an air of magic about the working of it.) Nothing is said about its shape. The sun 'goes up into' it and 'comes down from' it. It is supported by Atlas, or by pillars. It is the seat of the gods, for the peaks of Mt Olympus, where they have their houses, reach up to it.

Considered as a god himself, Uranus is the consort of Ge, Earth. The rain that fertilizes the earth and makes things grow is sometimes (from the 5th century BC on) represented as his seed, though this may be a rationalistic interpretation of the mythical marriage rather than its basic meaning. The mythical offspring were not, for example, vegetation spirits, but Titans, Cyclopes, and ogres with 100 hands, none of whom has any place in our present world. At their birth Uranus kept them pressed down inside Earth. In her discomfort she consulted with them, and Cronus (see CRONUS) was emboldened to take an adamantine sickle and castrate his father when he came at night to resume intercourse with Ge. Various divine or semi-divine beings sprang up from where the drops of blood fell on the earth. Cronus threw the severed genitals in the sea, and in the foam that formed round them Aphrodite was born. (Her name suggested 'foam'.) Cronus now became king of the gods, and Uranus played no further part in the divine history.

The episode represents a combination of two myths. One is about the separation of heaven and earth. Many peoples tell how the sky originally lay on the earth and later rose or was pushed to its present position. Sometimes a physical link such as a tree or navel-cord has to be severed; in Polynesian myth, heaven and earth were an embracing couple, Rangi and Papa, and Rangi's arms were cut through. Secondly, we have an Asiatic myth: in the Hittite version, Heaven is king of the gods for nine years and is then castrated; gods are born from his severed members. In the Babylonian version he is less prominent. The motif of children hated by their father and confined within their mother is there, and it is a son of Heaven who overthrows the father, but the primeval parents here are Apsu and Tiamat, the subterranean waters and those of the sea (see MESOPOTAMIA).

The personified Uranus owes his existence to these oriental models. He has no other significance in myth or cult. Indian evidence proves that Zeus was the original Father Sky and consort of Mother Earth; and he remained the real Greek sky god.

M. L. WEST

Uranus in Astrology

In 1781 Sir William Herschel identified a new planet, which was named first for King George III, then for Herschel himself and finally for the Greek sky god Uranus. The discovery of Uranus, and later of Neptune and Pluto, wrecked the traditional astrological picture of the order of the universe, in which the seven planets of antiquity corresponded to numerous other groups of seven, and round which so many religious, mystical and magical ideas had gathered (see CORRESPONDENCES; SEVEN). In the circumstances, it is not surprising that 'change' is the key notion which astrologers have come to associate with Uranus, especially change of a sudden, disruptive and revolutionary sort.

Astrologers say that it is only when a new planet is recognized that human beings seem to respond to its influence, even though the planet has been in existence, unrecognized, all along. They see the influence of Uranus behind all the violent and revolutionary upheavals of the modern world, from the French Revolution onwards, behind the accelerated pace of change, new inventions and discoveries, and progress in science and technology, especially in the fields of electricity and magnetism. Someone strongly influenced by Uranus is likely to be highly original and inventive, free-thinking and rebellious, independent, wilful, unconventional, wild and unorthodox, impatient of old systems and accepted ideas.

Some see the planet casting its shadow before it, as it were, in the American Revolution of 1776, and Uranus is believed to have played an important role in American history. It was in the ascendant sign, Gemini, when the Declaration of Independence was signed. It returned to Gemini, in an ominous conjunction with the two baleful planets Saturn and Mars, in 1860, the year before the outbreak of the Civil War. It was again in Gemini, and again in conjunction with Mars, in 1942, when the United States was again at war.

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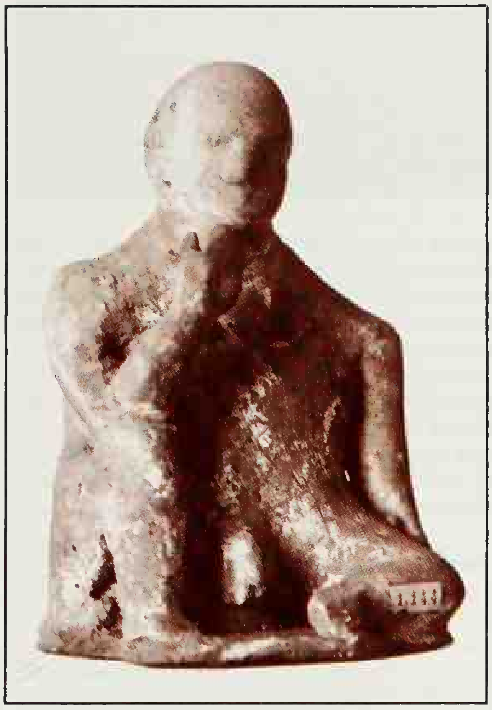
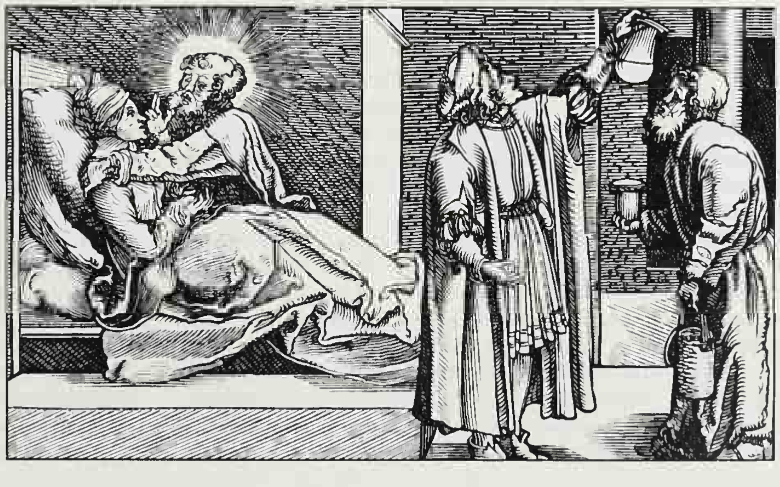


Mansell Collection

As a god Uranus is the consort of Ge, Earth; their mythical offspring were Titans, Cyclopes and ogres with 100 hands. He was castrated by his son Cronus, who became king of the gods, and divine or semi-divine beings sprang up where his blood fell on the earth: statuette from Tanagra in Greece



Mary Evans Picture Library

Urine

With other bodily secretions and excretions, valued in magic and alchemy because it was thought to retain some of the vital energy of the body from which it came and to provide a magical link with that body: a witch bottle was a device for turning a witch's spell or poison against her by boiling some of the victim's urine in a bottle; a person's urine was also bottled because its condition would reveal whether he was well or ill, safe or in danger, while away from home.

The folktale is not dead. On the contrary, today's traditional narratives of 'the death car' or 'the vanishing hitch-hiker' are passed on from one story-teller to the next and eagerly believed, in the same way that folktales were handed on by previous generations

URBAN LEGENDS

IN NEW YORK CITY in the 1960s it was generally believed that deep beneath the city's streets alligators of monstrous proportions lurked in the sewers. People who had gone to Florida on vacation and brought back baby alligators as pets and souvenirs had soon tired of them, it was said, and thrown them down the toilet. Flushed into the sewer system, they flourished mightily and grew to huge size, anything up to 8 feet long. This, at least, was the story that went the rounds, passed on at dinner parties and accepted in intellectual middle-class circles.

In the spring of 1992 a story circulated in Stoke-on-Trent in England about a young man who had met a stunning blonde girl in a nightclub, disappeared from view for two days and then been found in the bus station, minus one of his kidneys. The story was a fiction and the police denied it, but it soon spread to many other parts of the country.

The Death Car

Folklore is often thought of as something essentially rural and of the past, but stories of this kind are flourishing in modern cities, where there is evidently a need to believe in them. Called urban legends or contemporary legends, they have attracted considerable interest, and an International Society for Contemporary Legend Research was founded in the late 1980s.

The legends, which are frequently horrifying, are told as gospel truth, but seldom have a factual basis. A rare exception is the tale of the used automobile which is going astonishingly cheap because a previous owner was murdered or committed suicide in it, the corpse lay undiscovered in the car for some time and nobody has been able to get 'the smell of death' out of it. This story was known all over the United States and had crossed to England by the 1950s. Richard M. Dorson, the distinguished American folklorist, found students in every class that he taught at Michigan State University who knew the story and believed it. He succeeded in tracking the tale down to a place called Mecosta in Michigan and the year 1938, when the owner of a 1929 Ford committed suicide in it and the body was not found for three months. This genuine incident was the origin of the spreading legend, which is still in circulation, though the 'death car' itself never comes up for sale.

The alligators in the sewers legend may have a basis in fact, too. A report in the *New York Times* in 1935 has been discovered, describing how youths were shovelling snow down a manhole in East 123rd Street when they saw something moving in the blackness below, which turned out to be a large alligator. It was dragged out and killed. Where it came from and how it got there was never established. According to a book by a former Commissioner of Sewers for New York City, alligators of an average two feet length were in fact found in the sewers in the 1930s. Action was taken and they were eliminated by 1937.

Frank Spooner Pictures

1990
SAVE
BIG
Frank Spooner Pictures

Two of the most persistent urban legends are of the hitchhiker who vanishes, and is later discovered to have been dead at the time, and the automobile that cannot be sold at any price because of the ineradicable smell of death

The Vanishing Hitchhiker

Another hoary tale, older than the automobile itself, is the one about the driver on a lonely road who stops to pick up a hitchhiker, a seemingly perfectly normal and friendly person, who proves to have been a ghost. In an example heard in Toronto in 1973, a father and his daughter gave a girl a lift a few miles to her home, but when they reached there she had mysteriously vanished from the back seat of the car. They had not stopped and there had been no opportunity for her to slip out. They called at the house and the occupants said that their daughter had disappeared years ago, last seen hitching a lift on that very road – and today just happened to be her birthday.

A version of 1935 from Berkeley, California, has a man driving along one rainy night and giving a lift to a girl, a student with books under her arm. They were chatting companionably when suddenly he nearly crashed into another car, and was only saved because the girl pulled on the emergency brake. By the time the man had pulled himself together, his passenger had vanished. He assumed she must have got out and walked on home, but she had left a book on the seat. Next day he went to return the book and met the girl's father, who explained that his daughter had been killed in a car crash at that very spot a year earlier. The father took the book back to the library and found a gap in the shelves where it had been taken out.

In other variants the object the girl leaves in the car may be a purse, a scarf, a sweater or some other personal item, which helps to identify her afterwards. Or sometimes the driver sees a photograph of her on the mantelpiece or the piano when he goes to her home. In a version of 1940 from Los Angeles a group of men meet a girl in a saloon and give her a lift home. Because it is a cold night, she borrows an overcoat from one of them. At the Evergreen Cemetery she asks them to stop a minute, walks away and does not come back. After a while they go looking for her. They search around in the cemetery and can see no sign of her, but they find the overcoat draped over a headstone.

Before the automobile came on the scene, the same type of story was told in the horse age. In upstate New York in the 1890s there was a legend about a young woman jumping up behind young men on horseback and subsequently turning out to have been a ghost. There are examples from Illinois and Georgia in 1876 and 1912 in which the mysterious hitch-hiker is given a lift in a horse-drawn vehicle.

Though most of the recorded examples come from an American or British milieu, a similar story was heard in South Korea in 1941. A taxi-driver picked up a young woman at a crematorium at night. She asked him to take her to Mr Shimo's hardware store and, when they got there, asked him to wait while she went inside to get the money for the fare. When she didn't come back, he roused the sleeping household. There was no sign of her, but he saw her picture on the wall. She was Mr Shimo's daughter, who had died a few days before, and her body had been disposed of at that same crematorium. After discovering this, the driver was taken ill and died.

The Boyfriend's Death

Stories like this are passed on from one person and circle of friends and acquaintances to another in the same way that folktales, myths, epics, legends and ballads were handed on in the past, though today they are often given extra currency by the mass media as well. They circulate in schools and colleges, in offices, in bars and at dinner parties. Details and locations vary as the stories move across country, keeping them local and up-to-date. They are always told as true. The story really happened to someone recently, not the narrator but to someone reasonably close to the narrator, a relative, a friend, or at least a friend of a friend. The people who tell them do not think of themselves as carriers of folk traditions, but that is what they are.

Many of the stories have to do with cars and many are spooky and scary. A particularly grisly automobile legend is the one about the girl and her boyfriend who are out driving one pitch-black night when they hear on the car radio that a homicidal maniac is on the loose, escaped from a local asylum. Then, horrors, they run out of petrol. The boy goes to find a gas station, leaving the scared girl securely locked in the car. He tells her not to open the door until she hears his signal of three knocks on the window. Time goes by and presently she hears knocks on the car window, but they do not stop at three. They go on and on until she discovers that the sound is made by her boyfriend's shoes as his hanged body swings from the branch of a tree above the car.

There is a similar theme in the story of the roommate's death, a favourite with American college students, especially girl students. In a version recorded in 1986 at UCLA, two girl roommates stay on in college over Christmas. They are warned that a madman is on the prowl and they stay in their room with the door locked, but at night one of them has to make a run for the bathroom. Time goes by and she does not come back, and then the girl in the room hears scratching at the door. Scared stiff, she sits up against the door as the sinister scratching goes on and on. In the morning, when she plucks up courage to open the door, she finds the dead body of her roommate outside, with paint scratched off the door and paint chips under her fingernails.

In variants on this theme from the 1960s and 1970s the murdered girl is found in the morning with her vocal cords cut, with her arms and legs amputated, with a leg torn off. Why sadistically frightening dramas like this have such appeal, no one knows, but the same is true of many traditional children's stories. Attempts at psychoanalyzing the legends have been rejected as unconvincing by most students of the genre. There seems to be a psychological need to be scared that is not yet understood.

The Castrated Boy

Another nasty story which is particularly popular and widely told is the one about the little boy – usually five years old, but sometimes four or six – who accompanies his mother to a shopping centre and goes to the men's toilet. He does not come back and the mother, getting more and more anxious, asks someone to go and see what has happened. The boy is found lying in a pool of blood on the floor. He has been castrated.

No one will need reminding of atrocious real-life crimes committed against children, but this story is told as having happened when in fact it has not, but people want to believe it. In some versions, the boy is identified as white and his assailants as black. This has inspired comparisons with older folk traditions in which a minority group is accused, including the widespread tale of Jews murdering a Christian child, which circulated in Europe from the Middle Ages on. In many versions of the story, however, the assailants are not identified and there is no link with prejudice against any minority – though there is one variant in which the boy's attackers are children from rich families, who have used their influence with the police and the media to hush the horror up.

The Prevalence of Witches

Other contemporary legends have been linked with older traditions, too. An example is a story told in England in the 1970s about a woman living in a reputable block of flats in London. One day she was lighting the fire in her living room with a gas poker when the doorbell rang. Unable to put the hot poker down, she went to the door with it still in her hand. Outside was a man with a stocking mask over his face. He must have thought the poker was a weapon because he grabbed hold of it, then screamed in agony and ran away. Much shocked, she presently went to the flat downstairs and when a lady answered the door, looking flustered and upset herself, asked if she could come in and telephone the police. 'No,' she was told, 'I'm sorry, but you can't. My husband has just come in and he's badly burned his hand.'

The same motif of a criminal in disguise being unmasked by an injury appears in many age-old accounts of witches. The witch is in the form of a cat or some other animal whose paw is injured and subsequently the witch is discovered with a damaged hand. The masked robber in the London story is today's urban equivalent of the sinister witch-figure of earlier times. Even your neighbour in a respectable apartment block can be the feared and lurking enemy.

Another widespread legend in Britain tells of a man driving a rear-engined car at night and stopping at a traffic light when a band of marauding youths attack him and try to turn the car over. He drives quickly away and next day he finds four fingers which have been amputated by the fan in the car's air-cooling system. He soon hears that a youth with four fingers cut off has been treated at the local hospital's casualty department.

This tale, too, has parallels in older stories in which a witch invisibly arrests the progress of a cart and the remedy is to cut notches in the wheels, which hurts the witch so badly that she lets go. In a Suffolk version the carter cut deep notches in the spokes, screaming was heard from the witch's house and out the old beldame came, blood pouring from the cuts on her fingers, one for each notch in the wheel.

The Nephites

In Hawaiian versions of the vanishing hitchhiker story the mysterious traveller turns out to be the Honolulu volcano goddess, Pele, and in Mexican-American stories she is sometimes La Llorona, 'the weeping woman', a figure of Mexican tradition. The same thing has happened with the Mormon tradition of the three Nephites, benevolent figures who are descendants of Jews who emigrated to the New World six centuries before the time of Christ. Visiting them in America, Christ allowed them to remain alive in the world until the Second Coming and meanwhile appear to individual human beings as helpers. There are many stories of them in Mormon lore and in this century they have begun to amalgamate with the vanishing hitchhiker.

An example is a story from Ogden, Utah, about two Mormon ladies who saw an elderly man in old-fashioned clothes with a grey beard, hitching a lift at the roadside. As he looked kindly and seemed tired, they stopped to pick him up and as they drove on he told them that a time of famine was approaching and they should take care to store food – something the Mormon authorities had been recommending at the time. When the old man fell silent and the ladies turned to the back seat, he had vanished – and they never saw him again.

Fried Rat and German Submarine

Uneasiness about today's fast-food culture and misgivings about big business's ethics combine in the take-out Fried Rat legend, which is popular with American teenagers. A young couple are quietly enjoying a take-out chicken dinner, by dim candlelight at home or in darkness at a drive-in movie, and the girl has taken a few bites of her chicken when she complains that it tastes funny. The young man puts the lights on and they see that she is eating a crisply fried rat. (Interestingly, it is almost always the girl who eats the rat, not the man.)

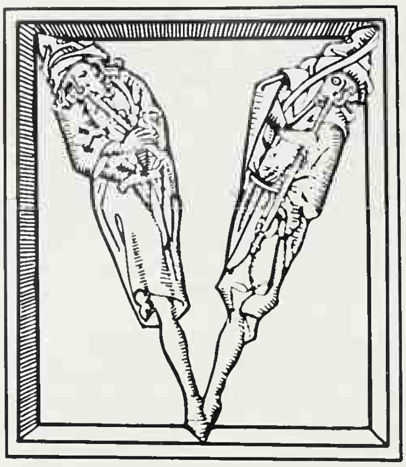
There are many European variants of this story, frequently expressing distrust of foreigners. In Britain, take-out food from a Chinese restaurant turns out to be cat or dog; from a curry restaurant, pet-food. In Germany, again, the dubious food comes from a foreign restaurant. A Swedish tale sets it in Greece, where a Swedish tourist has a delicious meal in a restaurant, gets a bone caught in his throat and is rushed to hospital, where it is removed and found to be a rat bone.

Although tales in this genre, circulating in modern industrialized society, were christened urban legends at first, it became clear that they were not confined to urban settings, hence the growing tendency to call the category contemporary legends. In 1994, for instance, a story set in a remote village on the west coast of Wales surfaced in the British press. The burden of it was that during the First World War a German submarine landed at the hamlet of Cwmtudu on Cardigan Bay and the crew came ashore in search of fresh water – or possibly beer. The inhabitants of Cwmtudu were Welsh-speaking and not much concerned with what might be going in the wider world. The broken English of the German sailors meant nothing to them, so they hospitably supplied the crew's wants. Other people in the area said it had happened during the Second World War, but naval historians denied the story any basis in truth.

Similar tales of German U-boat landings cling to the eastern coasts of both North and South America. One version has Germans marching 16 abreast down the main road outside St John's, Newfoundland. There are other stories of spectral submarines and U-boats enticingly laden with 'Nazi gold'. Legends like these help to enliven the sameness of ordinary everyday life.

RICHARD CAVENDISH

FURTHER READING: J.H. Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings* (Norton, New York, 1981).



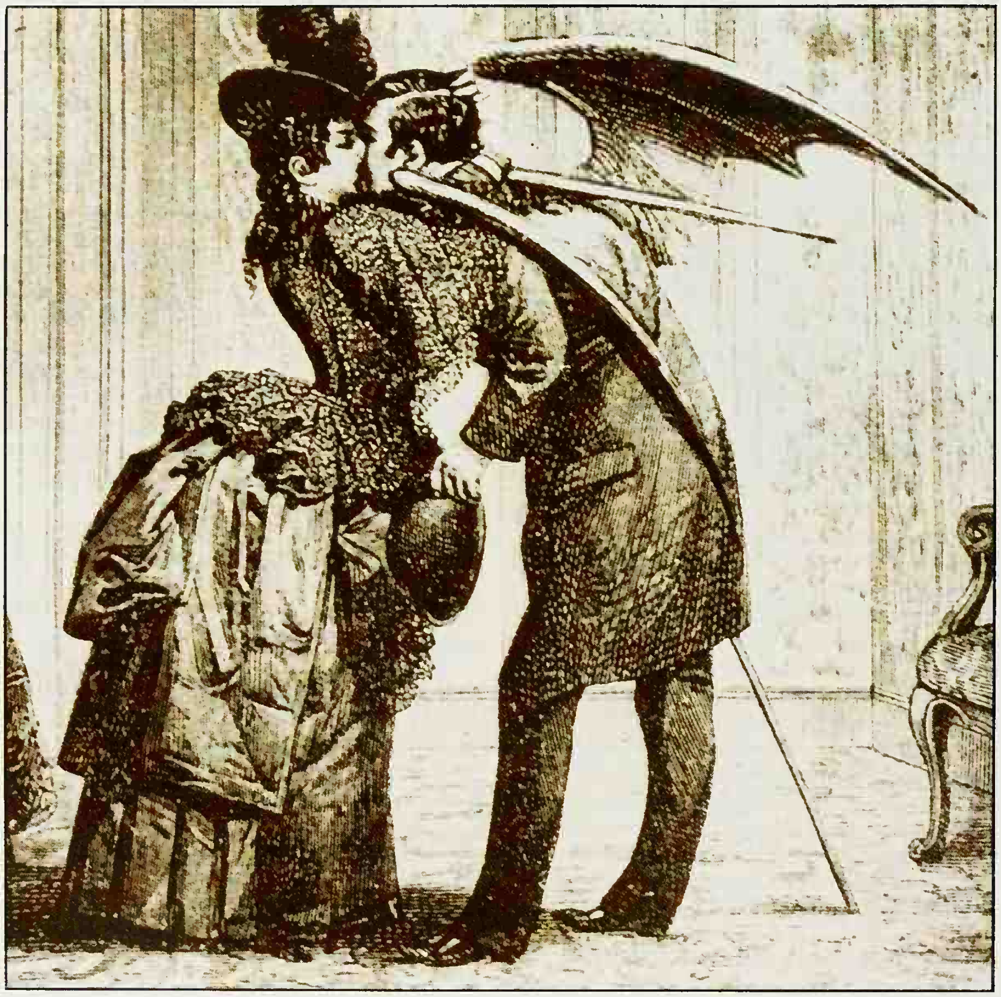
Valhalla

The hall of the slain, the paradise ruled by Odin in Norse mythology, to which heroes and distinguished warriors went after death, conducted there by the Valkyries, Odin's battle-maidens; there they fought all day and those who fell were restored again in the evening, to feast on pork and mead.
See ODIN.

VAMPIRE

TOGETHER with the golem in his guise as Frankenstein's monster, the vampire has become the world's best-known supernatural monster, the result of decades of horror films capitalizing on the imagination and researches of an Irish author named Bram Stoker. Before Stoker, the vampire legend had attracted attention, and had even become something of a fad in Europe, but it was jumbled, tangled, overgrown. Stoker pruned it, performed some judicious grafting, dressed it up in a richly purple prose, and added *Dracula* to the list of classic horror stories.

The name of his vampire was borrowed from the name of a 15th century Balkan nobleman whose sadistic cruelties justified his name; *dracul* means 'devil' in Rumanian. It was not difficult for Stoker to project the vampire evil onto the ugly actuality of the true story. And he did it so successfully that folklorists are sometimes surprised to find how often he has affected the more modern concepts of vampires.



The vampire in this 19th century engraving of a 'vampire kiss' has bat's wings, a comparatively modern addition to the legend, dating from the discovery of the 'vampire bat' of South America. The Victorians generally played down the strong sexual element in the vampire tradition, preferring to regard vampire legends as good gory horror stories, grown out of primitive beliefs about the dead

Rumanian Vampire Beliefs

In the district of Teleorman, on the third day after a death, when people go to the house of mourning in order to burn incense they carry with them nine spindles, and these they thrust deep into the grave. Should the vampire rise he would be pierced by their sharp points. Another method is to take tow, to scatter it upon the grave, and to set fire to it there, for it is believed that the occupant will scarce venture through the flames. Sometimes the anathema of a priest will confine the vampire in his tomb.

In the Romanati district the vampire is stripped and the naked carrion thrust into a stout bag. The clothes and cerements are sprinkled with holy water, replaced in the coffin which is secured and again buried in the grave. The body is taken away to the forest. The heart is first cut out, and then it is hacked piecemeal limb from limb and each gobbet burned in a great fire. Last of all the heart is flung into the flames and those who have assisted come near so that they shall be fumigated with the smoke. But all must be consumed, every shred of flesh, every bone. The veriest scrap if left would be enough to enable the vampire again to materialize. Occasionally the ashes of the heart are collected, mingled with water and given to sick people as a powerful potion.

At Zarnesti after a female vampire had been exhumed great iron forks were driven through the heart, eyes, and breast after which the body was buried at a considerable depth, face downwards . . .

It is held to be imperative that the vampire should be traced to his lair and destroyed at the very first opportunity. If he is sufficiently cunning to avoid detection so long at the end of seven years he will become a man again, and then he will be able to pass into another country, or at any rate to a new district, where another language is spoken. He will marry and have children, and these after they die will all go to swell the vampire host.

Montague Summers *The Vampire in Europe*

It is also surprising, considering the wide fame of the vampire motif, to realize that the legend is comparatively young and that it was for a long time highly localized. Corollaries and ancestors of the vampire, several times removed, are fairly plentiful. Evil bloodsucking demons or witches and blood-hungry ghosts abound in primitive belief. And the ancient world also offers antecedents in the blood-consuming ghosts in the *Odyssey*, in Ovid and elsewhere. There is also the demonic Lilith of ancient Hebrew legend, who had many vampire traits, and the Romans conceived of the lamia, a near relation of the vampire, who enticed men sexually and then feasted on their blood (see INCUBUS; LILITH). The Arabs believed in blood-eating spirits, and the ancient Irish told of a comparable demon. But none of these creatures was a vampire, as it is now defined, although such legends probably blended and crystallized to give rise to the concept. Almost exclusively a creature of the Slavic regions and Balkan states of eastern Europe, the vampire first made its appearance in its present form in the 16th century.

The word 'vampire' comes from various eastern European terms, including the Magyar *vampir*. By the 17th century, the word was on a great many lips; vampire activity seems to have burgeoned rapidly in the Balkans, and to have occurred as far afield as Greece, where fearsome tales of the *vrykolakas* spread from town to town. Balkan clergy reported the spread of such tales, and their superiors spoke of a new offensive by the Enemy. Then in the 17th century a Greek writer named Leone Allacci separated the concept of the vampire from standard Christian demonology.

Travellers began to pick up hints of the new horror, and patched them together in their writings for the rest of Europe. The first stage of the legend's spread was completed in 1746 when a French monk named Dom Augustin Calmet published a learned treatise on vampires.

Late 18th century romanticism had fallen in love with the Gothic, and vampires suited the fashion nicely. Goethe wrote some vampire verses and in the following years so did Byron and Southey, Gautier and Baudelaire.

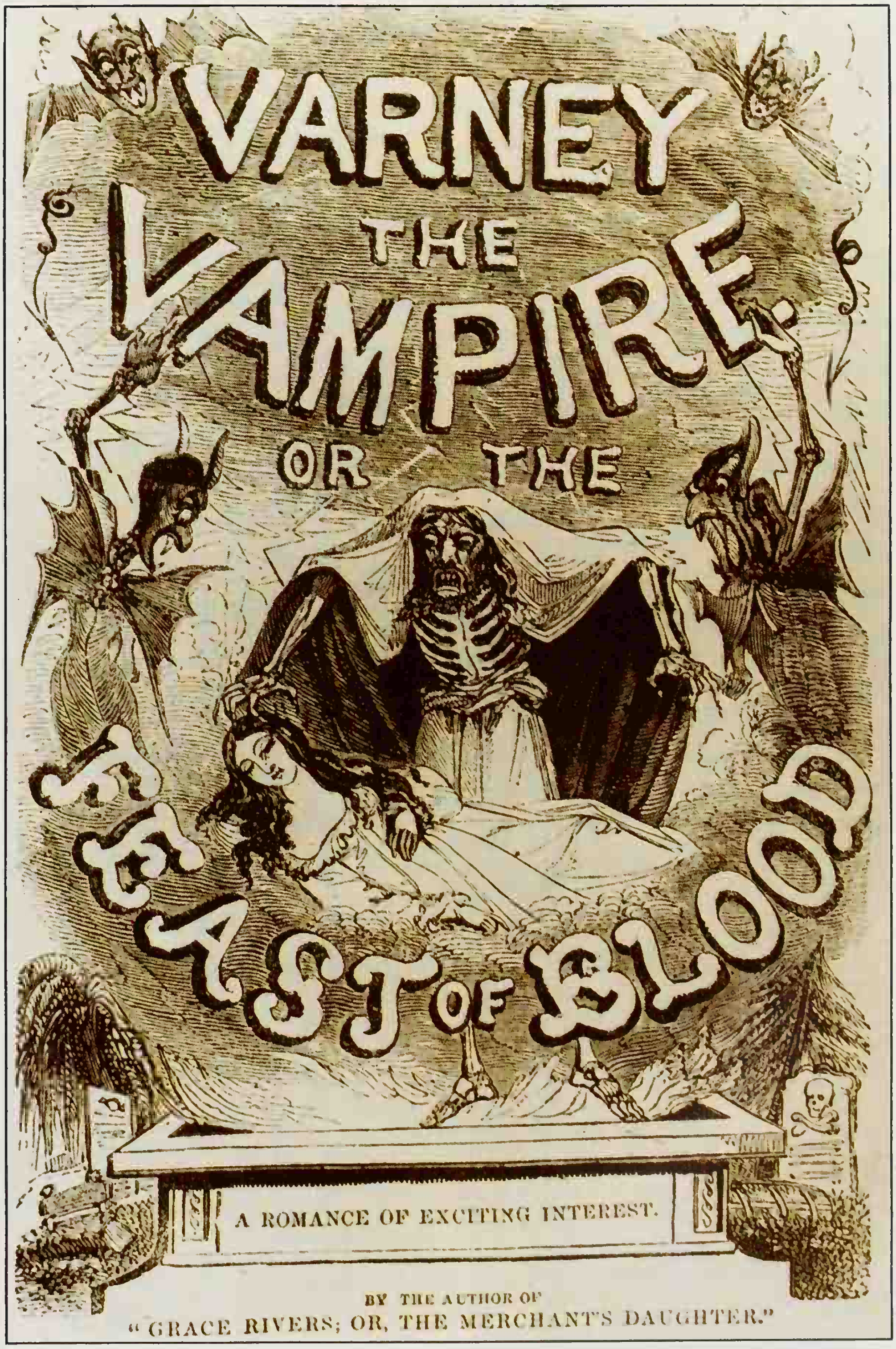
The vampire soon reached the theatre; a successful play in Paris in the 1820s spawned imitators, and as the years passed hardly a stage in Europe lacked its vampire. A singing vampire entertained German opera audiences in 1828; Alexander Dumas wrote a successful stage play on this theme in the 1850s; the London stage also presented vampires, and was in fact still doing so in 1925 with a dramatization of *Dracula*. In 1931 the cinema took over, and assured the immortality of Bela Lugosi who played Count Dracula (see FILMS). But long before that the fashion for vampires had reached a new height in prose fiction, with the publication in 1847 of a story called *Varney the Vampire*, some 800 pages of horrification, gory action and nauseous over-writing. It was an instant bestseller; but it was eclipsed at the end of the century when Bram Stoker published his classic blend of folklore and fantasy.

From then on, the vampire's world-wide notoriety was assured. And although other great vampire stories exist, the creature as he is now known is almost indistinguishable from his incarnation as Count Dracula. In studying the folklore vampire it is never possible to get very far away from the evil Transylvanian aristocrat.

It must be remembered that the vampire is a resuscitated corpse, not an immaterial spirit. Primitive people often fail to draw our distinction between the body of someone who has died and the spirit; they may feed the corpse in order to placate the ghost. And it is rarely clear whether tribesmen think of the dead as returning in bodily form or as insubstantial apparitions. This confusion is found to some degree in vampire lore. But basically the vampire is a walking corpse with some of the powers and functions of a non-corporeal spirit.

As a cadaver, the vampire looks cadaverous: lean, pale with the pallor of death, icy cold to the touch. Some tales describe him as skeletal and withered, like an Egyptian mummy, and he may be clothed in a shroud. But more usually he is said to be merely gaunt to an extreme, and to wear

The vampire theme was well suited to the late 18th century with its love of the Gothic, and Goethe and Byron were among the poets who wrote verses on the subject. In the 19th century the vampire fashion reached new heights in prose fiction with the publication of *Varney the Vampire* (1847)


VARNEY
THE
VAMPIRE.
OR THE
FEAST OF BLOOD
A ROMANCE OF EXCITING INTEREST.
BY THE AUTHOR OF
"GRACE RIVERS; OR, THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER."

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

normal clothing with perhaps a touch of the theatrical, like Dracula's entirely black costume. His thinness may vanish, in some cases, when he is well fed; when, like a leech, he is horribly swollen with engorged blood. At these times he may be decidedly hot to the touch. But more usually the only sign of life about his face will be the thick ruddiness of his lips, which are frequently drawn back to display long, pointed canine teeth.

The vampire's eyes gleam, and sometimes flash redly, and his ears may be pointed, as were Dracula's. These features seem to be borrowings from the older tradition of the werewolf (see WEREWOLF); similarly, the vampire will have sharp curved finger nails, eyebrows that meet above the nose, and he will be extremely hairy, with hair on the palms of his hands. His limited diet gives him foul breath but also makes him preternaturally strong despite his thinness.

A few isolated groups of tales add some special features, for extra horror effects. There is the Bulgarian suggestion that a vampire has only one nostril, or the old Polish idea that his tongue has a sharp point or barb. Vampire tales from Greece described the creature as having blue eyes; but this was merely a way of saying that blue-eyed people, rare creatures in Greece, were probably vampires. Anyone who is 'different' in some way has always been a convenient victim when the conforming majority is looking for enemies of the *status quo*. People with hare-lips, or red hair, or odd birthmarks, and children born with teeth, have all been persecuted for alleged vampirism.

These victims may well have wished that they *were* vampires, for folklore endows the creature with some impressive supernatural powers. The old eastern European legends underline its character as one of the 'walking dead' by stating that it can get in and out of its grave through six feet of soil. According to some Balkan stories, the grave of a vampire is punctuated by numerous small holes, which are channels down to the coffin through which the creature filters up to the surface. This is one of the main examples of the lack of distinction between corpse and ghost: the vampire is a material body with some of the abilities of an immaterial spirit. Hungarian tales overcome the problem by giving vampires the magical ability of changing into clouds of mist, a trick that Bram Stoker borrowed for Dracula; the Count could slip into locked and sealed rooms through the space under a door, or the keyhole, to reach a victim.

The shape-changing powers of the vampire also enable it to turn into various animals, usually noxious or nocturnal creatures with long-standing supernatural associations. And the vampire will sometimes have such animals at its beck and call, as aides in its evil-doing. Dracula had a pack of wolves under his control to terrify travellers; and the old tales similarly include wolves, or werewolves, among the vampire's animal companions, along with cats, owls, rats, and sometimes even flies. The vampire sometimes changed itself into animals such as these, most often a wolf or a cat. Dracula for instance was able to change into wolf form. And of course he also turned himself into a bat, a metamorphosis that has been emphasized in films. Stoker, however, used the bat sparingly. The old vampire tales of eastern Europe almost never depict the creature assuming this last form.

When the 19th century globe-trotting urge sent Europeans as far afield as South America, their travellers' tales sometimes told of the curious fauna of the continent, including a strange bat which fed solely and exclusively on the blood of animals or people. The world reached into folklore to give it its popular name – the vampire bat; and folklore and fiction incorporated it in the supernatural vampire tradition.

One further special power attributed to the vampire, apart from filtering out of a grave or tomb, and shape-changing, is its ability to hypnotize its victims, preventing them from struggling while it feasts, and also from remembering their fearful visitor the next morning. The vampire can therefore return again and again to the same victim, who will complain merely of having had shadowy nightmares and feeling anaemic.

A Stake Through the Heart

According to tradition, if people become aware of the presence of a vampire there is a battery of defences and reprisals that can be brought into action against it. The creature is bound up in a more extensive array of 'rules', within which it must operate, than any other folklore horror; and these rules contain defences against the vampire. It must of course be active only at night; but because it is a walking corpse, it must not only rest by day but must rest in its own grave or tomb. A few Balkan tales describe vampires moving freely around during the day, but this is generally thought to be cheating. On the other hand, the old tales do not say that sunlight is actively harmful to the vampire; this idea is a contribution of horror fiction, and films.

In fact many things can hurt, or at least ward off, a vampire. It shuns silver, as evil creatures have done since antiquity, and also hates garlic, and the plant's pungent flowers are useful to have at the window, or around the neck, if vampires are about. Since Christian times, the creature has actively feared the crucifix in any form, an idea that is partly the result of belief that all evil is in some way derived from Satan, the Enemy, and that the symbol of Christ will therefore oppose it. But older tales, from a Devil-oriented age, are sometimes more explicit: theories by European churchmen of the 17th century suggested that the corpse

Left John Haigh as a choirboy; accused of murdering nine people, whose blood he was said to have drunk, he has been called the 'vampire of London'. Isolated cases of people who suffer from a mania for consuming blood may have provided a factual basis for some legends of vampirism *Right* A fairground 'vampire' in Sydney, Australia; the embodiment of repressed sexual wishes, and guilts that come 'from the unconscious world of infantile sexuality', the vampire is one of the most popular of supernatural monsters

Jeffrey Craig

which became a vampire was in fact activated, or powered, by a demon from hell, and not by its original soul. Therefore it would especially fear the cross.

Silver, garlic and the cross are forms of protective magic; but vampire lore also specifies preventive magic which is widely used in lands riddled with the vampire fear. In these regions it seems that every deceased person would be ringed round with charms to bind him into his grave. These often resemble primitive methods for keeping the dead from rising. The Chiriguono tribe of South America, for instance, fastened a corpse into its grave with pegs, which also kept the ghost down, and some old Slavonic tales suggest thrusting iron skewers through the earth over a grave, so that the corpse would be magically pinned down. The iron works the magic: evil things shun cold iron almost as much as silver. Many European people simply placed a lump of iron in a dead man's coffin, to keep him in his grave. Other methods of ensuring this included putting a branch of hawthorn or some similar sacred tree, or a wreath of garlic flowers, on the coffin.

There are also all the practices by which, in European lore, any ghost is kept down when there is cause to believe that he may walk – this applies to suicides, executed criminals and so on. They are buried under running water, or at crossroads, or the corpse has a stake driven through its heart. In lands where belief in vampires took precedence even over ghosts, these techniques became charms against vampires.

However, if neither preventive nor protective magic is effective, there are still ways in which the monster can be destroyed. First, though, the vampire must be captured. Few vampires are as gregarious as Dracula, who invited people to stay at his castle, where the truth about him was revealed in several ways: his appearance, his absence by day, or the fact that he had no reflection in a mirror.

If vampire activity broke out in a particular region the locals would repair to the cemetery and examine the graves. Hopefully, they might find one with the small telltale perforations through which the monster filtered up from its coffin. Or they might borrow an old Hungarian test for vampirism. In this a white stallion that has never stumbled and never been to stud is taken to the cemetery; the horse will refuse to walk on a vampire's grave.

If there were no indications above the ground of vampire activity, the hunters would have to open the graves, and look for a corpse that had not decomposed. These trials could take place with perfect safety during the day while the vampire was dormant, but the searchers had to give themselves time to get back indoors before sunset. The uncorrupted corpse would bear additional signs of vampirism: the typical facial appearance, and traces of blood on mouth and face.

Once a vampire has been caught, it can be easily destroyed. For that matter, the monster could be shot with a silver bullet at night, while it was active, provided the hunter could avoid the creature's hypnotic eyes for long enough. Ideally the bullet should be made from a melted-down crucifix, or at least blessed by a priest. A safer method is to find the vampire in its coffin and to employ some homely magic to keep it there. The main technique is to drive a short, sharp stake into its heart.

The tales recommend using sacred wood for the stake, perhaps the thorn, or aspen. According to some traditions only one blow must be used to drive it home, or the 'pinning' magic will not work. Albanian tales suggest using a consecrated dagger, in the shape of the cross, instead of a stake. Other legends recommend that the monster be decapitated as well as staked; and specify that the beheading must be done with the sexton's spade. Sometimes the beheaded and staked vampire is then conclusively destroyed by the purification of fire.

These powerful defensive and offensive rituals and charms seem to give the living an advantage over the vampire, who at night can be balked by garlic or the cross, and who is wholly at the hunter's mercy during the day. But the vampire has one magical power not mentioned so far. He can recruit his victims into the ranks of vampirism. According to some tales, anyone who dies from loss of blood as the result of a vampire's continued attacks will instantly rise again as a new vampire. Other traditions suggest that even one or two non-fatal attacks by a vampire will cause the victim eventually to rise again after his or her natural death. For every vampire staked and destroyed,

British Film Institute

Dracula, the most famous of all vampires, was created at the end of the 19th century by Bram Stoker, so effectively that the character has passed into modern folklore: scenes from the 1931 film with Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula *(left)* and from the 1958 film in which the part of the vampire count was played by Christopher Lee *(right)*

several new ones will have been created.

Nor is this recruitment the only way in which vampires can come into existence. The lands most rife with vampire lore associated many supernatural traditions that are elsewhere ascribed to ghosts with these creatures. In the Balkans, anyone dying in a state of sin, without the Church's blessing, would rise again as a vampire; this category would especially include suicides and excommunicants. Perjurers and people cursed by their parents, in fact any exceedingly wicked person, might also walk as vampires after their deaths, as would anyone who dabbled in black magic.

According to western European folklore, such evil-doers must come back after death as insubstantial haunts, punished with eternal restlessness for their evil ways, and bound to this earth in a dreadful shadowy immortality. Western European tales also insist that the victims of evil return as haunts; and similarly, in eastern Europe, such victims return, through no fault of their own, as vampires. A murdered man whose death goes unavenged becomes a vampire (especially in Greek tales); so does a child who dies unbaptized, or a man whose corpse does not receive a Christian burial.

In addition to these borrowings from the older ghost traditions, vampire lore has produced some original ideas about the creation of the monsters. In Rumania, for instance, men who are werewolves reappear after death as vampires. Greek legends assert that anyone born on Christmas Day runs the risk of becoming a vampire; and other tales suggest that a seventh son, or a child born with a 'caul', might rise as a vampire after death. According to Rumanian tradition, if a vampire stares at a pregnant woman she will give birth to a potential vampire, unless a priest's blessing can cancel out the evil.

Hungry for Blood

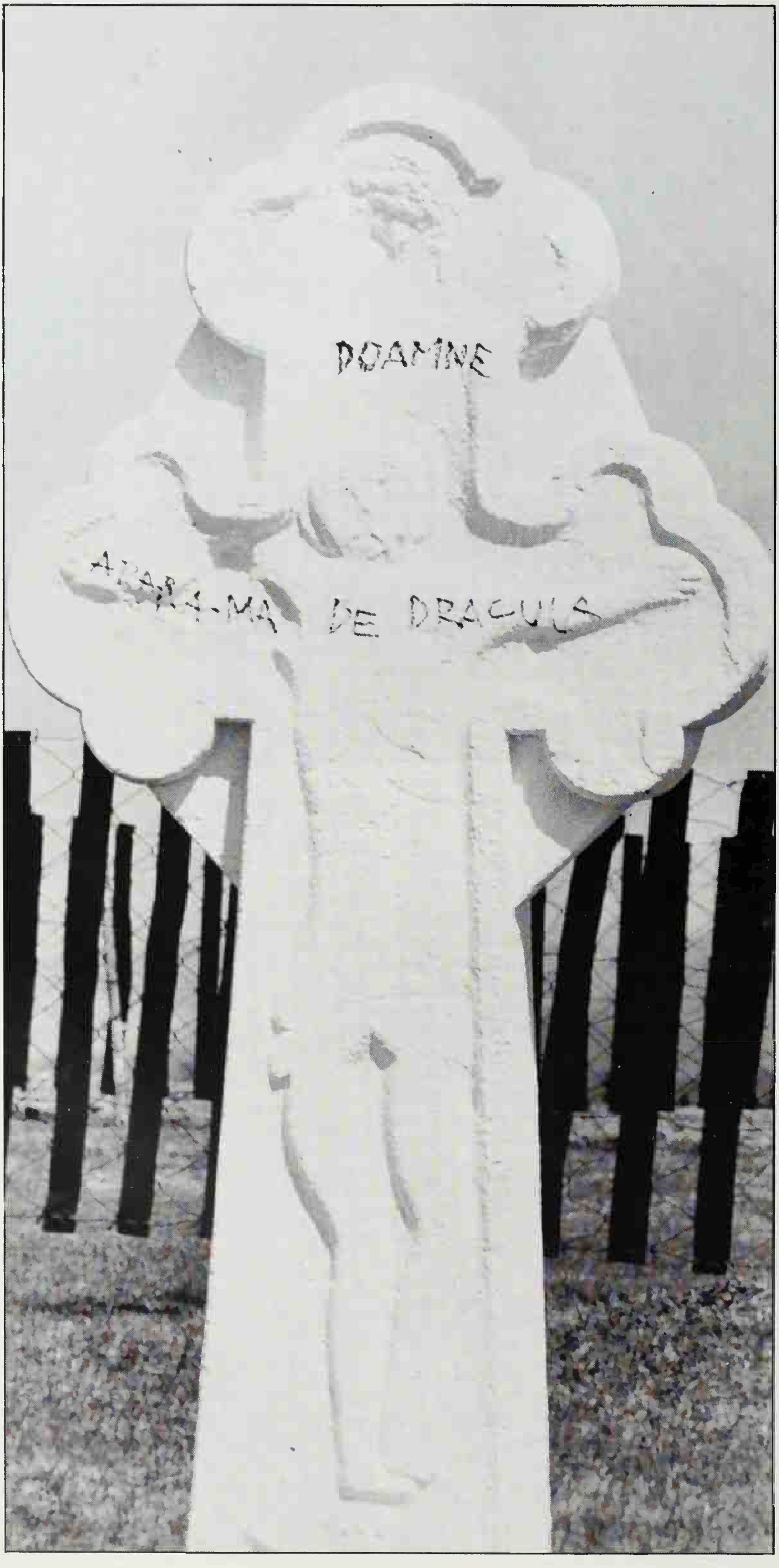
The weird assortment of ways in which vampires are bred do not reflect the purpose for which the creature arises. Unlike ghosts, witches and demons, the vampire is not impelled by any of the familiar evil urges or intentions such as revenge, terrorizing or tempting souls from the righteous path. The vampire is merely obsessively hungry. He seeks blood to give him the pseudo-life he needs to seek more blood.

Folklore contains many instances of the animation of the dead by blood. In the *Odyssey* shadowy phantoms regain substance and the power of speech after drinking blood; witches fed their familiars on their own blood. And there is the story of a 19th century French doctor who pumped blood into the severed head of a guillotined prisoner, and was convinced that the head came briefly to life and took on a 'puzzled' expression.

The fascination of the vampire legend may be explained, to some extent, by the few nuggets of reality that lurk within the folklore. Some writers, for instance, make much of the parallel between vampires rising from the grave and the prevalence in past centuries of premature burial. Inadequate medical knowledge meant that people were sometimes buried before they were dead; and folklorists find some possible explanation for the 'uncorrupted corpse' aspect of the legend in this fact.

In the 16th and 17th centuries it was not uncommon for a number of people in a village to die, apparently inexplicably, from what were then unknown diseases. If a number of graves were later opened, and it was found that one of the recently buried corpses had not yet started to decompose, seemed to have changed position, and had a frightful expression on its face and blood on its hands, vampirism seemed to be the obvious explanation. In fact, the corpse would have been that of a person buried prematurely who had awoken in the grave and died horribly, trying to claw his way out.

There are also numerous cases of long-dead corpses remaining intact; examples may be found especially in accounts of Christian saints. There is also a supposedly true story from Italy which tells how the body of a woman buried in 1820 was exhumed 30 years later and found to be wholly uncorrupted. One of the exhumers accidentally cut the corpse's leg with a



A cross bearing the inscription in Rumanian, 'My God, save me from Dracula': ***dracul*** **means 'devil' in Rumanian and Bram Stoker gave his vampire the name of a 15th century nobleman, noted for his sadistic cruelties. Vampires are said to fear the cross of Christ, which can be used as a weapon against them**

spade, and blood gushed from the wound, as blood is supposed to flow from a vampire when it is staked, after which decomposition set in rapidly. In a superstitious age incidents such as these might well have given rise to a number of 'vampire' tales.

Finally, we must look behind a curtain drawn over the vampire theme by the moralizers of the 19th century. In Victorian times explicit accounts of brutality and violence were perfectly proper for widespread dissemination, but anything containing more than a hint of sexuality required censorship. This attitude produced the view that vampire legends are just good gory horror stories, grown out of primitive superstitions about the dead. In fact, vampirism is a blatantly sexual motif, riddled with oral eroticism and sado-masochism.

The old Balkan tales rarely omitted the sexual side of vampirism: married vampires arose from the grave to bestow their terrible attentions on their marriage partners, while those who were unmarried visited attractive young persons of the opposite sex. And it was not solely blood lust that impelled them. But in later tales, and in fiction, the sexual angle was more oblique.

The vampire bites his victims; and anyone with the slightest knowledge of Freud knows that a bite is a sado-erotic kiss; in *Dracula* the female vampires around Jonathan Harker's bed comment that his health and strength mean 'kisses for us all'. Even the creature's appearance, his thick red lips and unusual hairiness, corresponds to widely-held folk beliefs about excessively sex-oriented people.

Blood is profoundly involved with sexuality in man's psyche, a belief that is reflected in the widespread taboos placed on menstruating women. And modern psychology has shown the predominance of blood and blood-letting in the erotic fantasies of many psychiatric patients.

The British author Maurice Richardson has described the vampire legend as 'a kind of incestuous, necrophilous, oral-anal-sadistic all-in wrestling match'. The vampire embodies repressed sexual wishes and guilts which come 'from the unconscious world of infantile sexuality'. This view may unsettle some people who have enjoyed reading fictions like *Dracula*, or Sheridan Le Fanu's story *Carmilla* (1872), which has an unmistakable theme of lesbianism. But it is these undercurrents which are the main reason for the vampire's staying power, in the forefront of our favourite supernatural horrors.

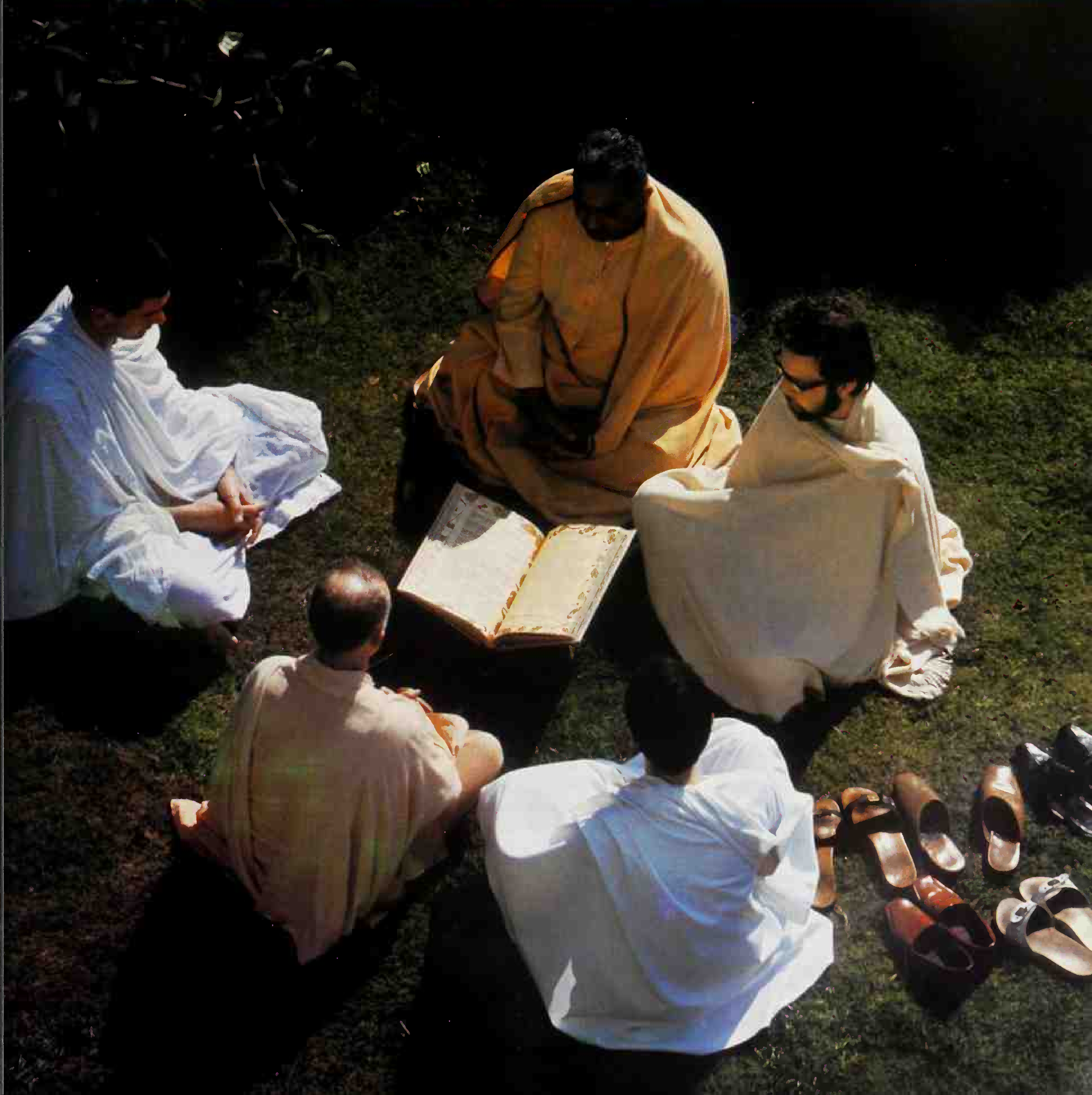
DOUGLAS HILL

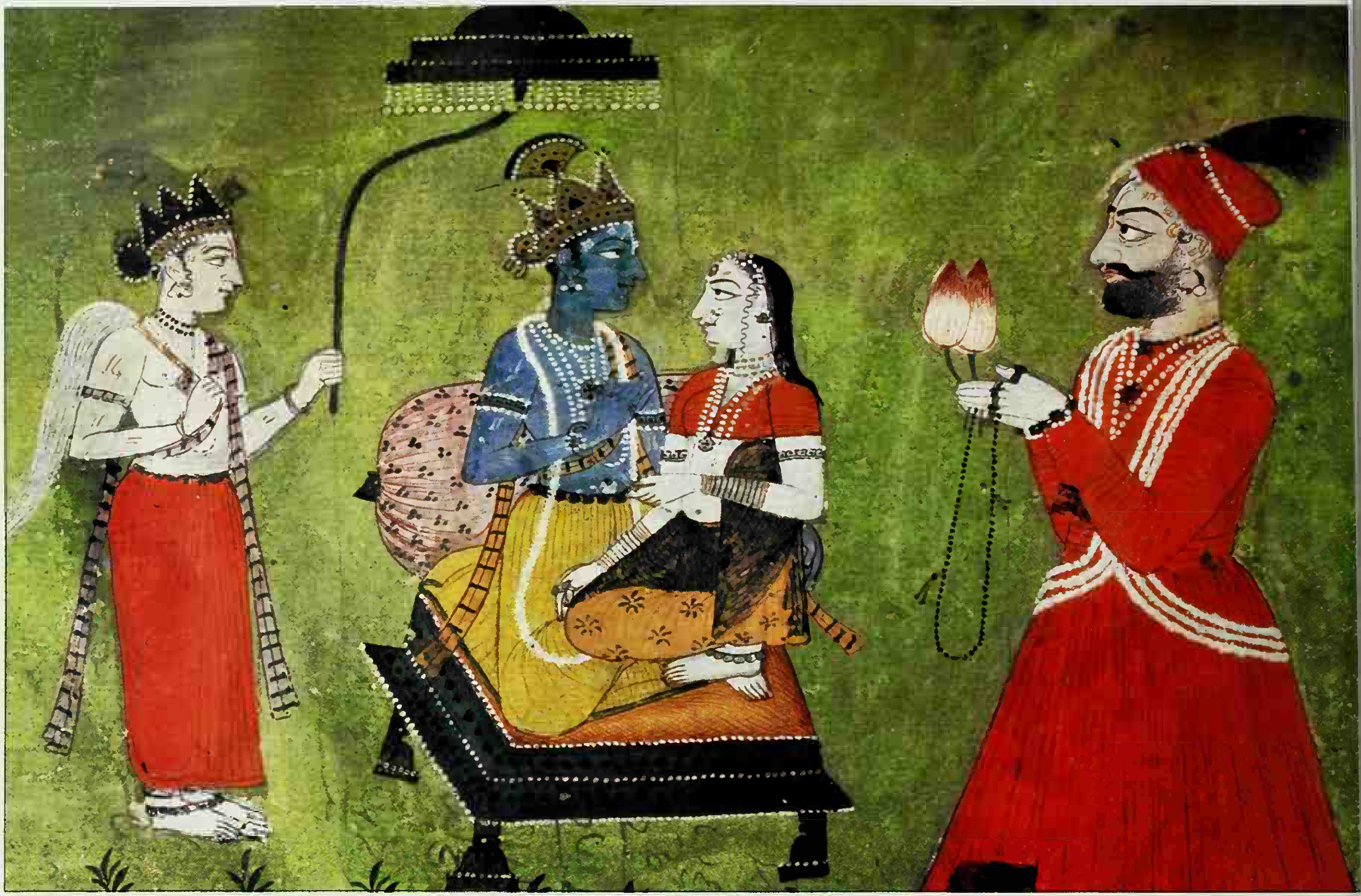
FURTHER READING: David Bischoff, *Vampires of the Night World* (Ballantine, 1981); R. McNally and V. R. Florescu, *In Search of Dracula* (New York Graphic Society, 1972); Montague Summers, *Vampire in Europe*.

VEDANTA

तन्नो हंसः प्रचोदयात्

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION





Vedanta is not a cult, but a philosophy which can be used to describe and interpret any of the great religions of the world *Previous page* A London group receive instruction in Vedanta; they are affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission (*inset*), named after the modern Hindu saint who taught that all religions are true

The various methods of achieving union with the Atman are suited to different temperaments: bhakti yoga works through worship, prayer and concentration on a divine personality, while jnana yoga offers to its disciples salvation through intellectual effort

Above A rajah, holding a rosary as he makes *japam*, worships the god Rama, his wife and brother *Above right* Rama and his brother visit four hermits, who have withdrawn to the forest to devote themselves to meditation

Vedanta begins with the proposition that there is an eternal all-pervading Reality which remains unchanged amidst changing appearances

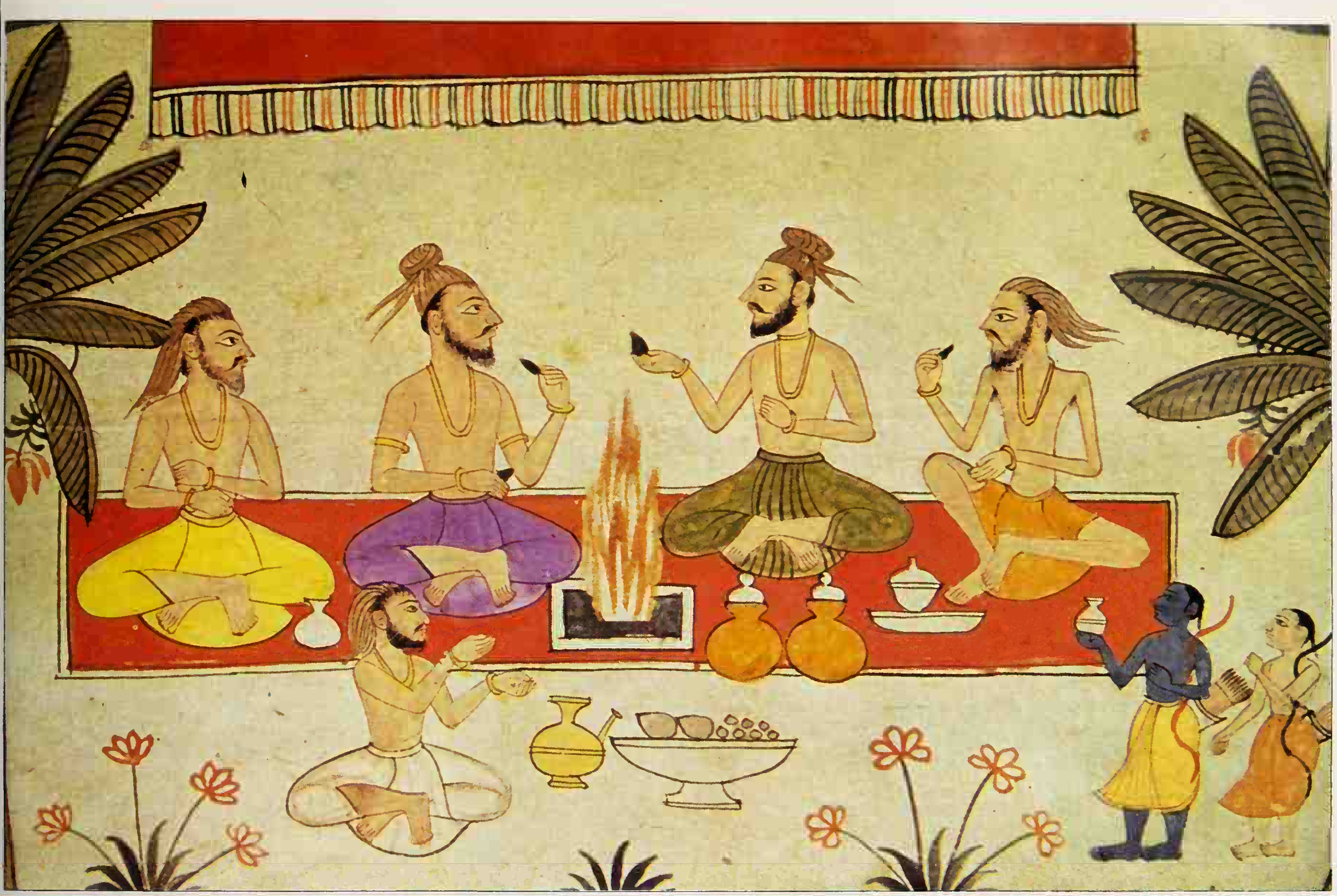
According to Vedanta, the meaning and purpose of life for every person on earth is to know Brahman-Atman, the all-pervading Reality: four main paths lead to this ultimate union – the way of devotion, the way of knowledge, the way of action and the way of meditation

VEDANTA is a Sanskrit word which means ‘the end of the *Vedas*’, the scriptures which form the basis of the Hindu religion. There are four of them; the *Rig*, the *Sama*, the *Yajur* and the *Atharva*. The traditional Hindu belief is that they were composed by seers at the very beginning of human history. In any case their origin is obscure and exceedingly ancient.

The Hindus regard the *Vedas* as being divine truth – truth known by men through experience of union with the divine in man – but their attitude toward them is not the same as that of the devotees of other religions toward their own sacred books. The Hindus do not demand that the *Vedas* shall be approached in a spirit of uncritical faith. On the contrary, they insist that each individual must verify the truths taught by the *Vedas* through his own effort and practice, in his own life.

The content of the *Vedas* is varied, and scholars have divided it into two categories which they call the Work Portion and the Knowledge Portion respectively. Each of the four *Vedas* contains both a Work and a Knowledge portion. The Work Portion includes prayers, hymns, rules of conduct, instructions for the performance of sacrificial rites and religious duties. The Knowledge Portion consists of the *Upanishads*.

The word *Upanishad* means ‘sitting near one’s spiritual teacher (guru) in a mood of devotion’. Its further meaning is ‘the secret teaching’, in other words, the teaching which may be imparted only to those disciples who are fit to receive it. Of the 108 *Upanishads* included in the *Vedas*, ten are regarded as being of major importance. Some of them are direct expositions of spiritual truth; others are set forth as dialogues between a teacher and one or more disciples. Their teaching may be conveyed in the form of a story; for example, the story of the boy Nachiketa’s visit to the house of the King of Death, in the *Katha*



Robert Skelton

Upanishad. Or it may be contained in a poetic image, as when, in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the noise of the thunder, *Da*, is interpreted by three different classes of pupils to mean three different things: *damayata* 'be self-controlled', *datta* 'be charitable', *dayadhwam* 'be compassionate'.

Vedanta means 'the end of the *Vedas*' in two senses. First, the Knowledge Portion does in fact come after the Work Portion in each *Veda*. Second, the word *anta*, like 'end' in English, also means goal or purpose. Vedanta is therefore the purpose of the *Vedas*, the reason for their existence; that is, their teaching. And since the teaching of the *Vedas* has been restated and explained by many commentators in many books, the word Vedanta may also be used to describe this vast literature, which is still being added to today.

Unchanging Brahman

Vedanta is sometimes used as a synonym for the Hindu religion, but this is inaccurate. In one sense, the Hindu religion is something more than Vedanta, since it includes the cults of numerous aspects of God and of divine incarnations – Rama, Krishna, Durga, Kali, Vishnu, Shiva, Ramakrishna, to name only a few. In another sense, Vedanta is something more than the Hindu religion, since it is not a cult but a philosophy and as such can be used to describe and interpret any of the great religions of the world. One could, for example, be simultaneously a Christian and a Vedantist – always provided that one was ready to agree that Jesus was not the only divine incarnation. Vedanta, by the terms of its own philosophy, must be universal.

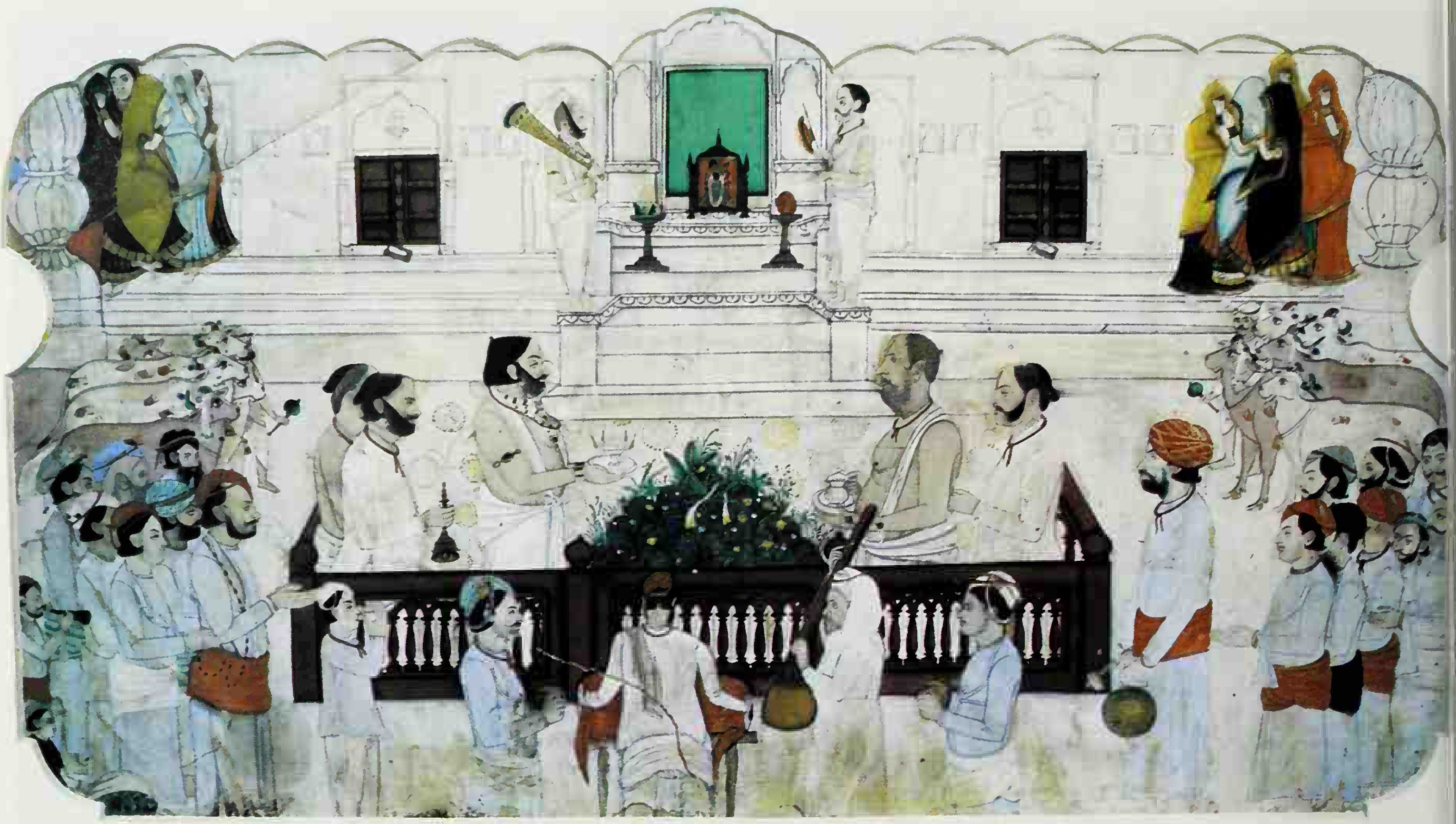
Vedanta begins with the proposition that there is an eternal all-pervading Reality, without characteristics or attributes, which remains unchanged amidst the changing appearances of our universe. When spoken of as external, or transcendent, this Reality is called Brahman; when spoken of as internal, or immanent, it is called the Atman (see BRAHMAN). But, since the Reality is both external and internal, these names imply absolutely no difference in essence, only in one's subjective viewpoint. The Brahman around us *is* the Atman within us.

Brahman-Atman is described as being *Sat-chit-ananda*, absolute existence, absolute consciousness, absolute bliss, but these are not to be thought of as attributes. Brahman *is* existence, *is* consciousness, *is* bliss. It is the existence through which all else exists, the consciousness which contains all knowledge, the bliss which is beyond all desire and fear and is therefore absolute peace.

There are those who mistakenly describe Vedanta as pantheistic. (Pantheism, as defined by *Webster's Dictionary*, is the doctrine that the universe, taken as a whole, is God.) But Vedanta makes a clear distinction between Brahman and the universe, although it sees them as intimately related. The universe is called an effect of Brahman, inseparable from Brahman in the same sense that heat is an effect of fire and inseparable from fire. Nevertheless, heat is not identical with fire and Brahman is not identical with the universe. The universe changes; Brahman does not change.

In the *Upanishads* one finds nothing which can be described as pantheism. But there are two interpretations of the Brahman-universe relationship which at first sight seem contradictory. In certain passages it is stated that nothing but Brahman exists; in others, that Brahman and universe coexist eternally. This seeming contradiction arises because two different levels of mystic perception are being described. The seer who has experienced the reality of Brahman and who then returns to normal consciousness may declare that the universe he sees around him has no substance and that there is in truth nothing but Brahman. But this same seer, if he is on the level of mystic perception which is between the normal and the supernormal, may declare that he sees both Brahman and the universe, both inner and outer, simultaneously.

Vedanta's second proposition is that Brahman-Atman, being the true nature of man, as of all creatures and objects, can be known by man. To know yourself, according to Vedanta, is to know the Atman within you, not the ego-personality, labelled Mr Smith or Mrs Brown, with which you ordinarily identify yourself. Indeed, this ego-personality can never be fully known, since it is subject to continual change and since it is like an onion: when you have removed all of its skins there is nothing left. The process of knowing the Atman is therefore a process of ceasing to identify yourself with the ego-personality. The ego's fundamental claim is



that it is separate from and other than its neighbours and surroundings. But the seer who knows the Atman within him knows in the same instant that he is essentially one with his neighbours and surroundings, since their true nature is also Brahman-Atman.

Vedanta's third proposition is that the meaning and purpose of life for every individual on earth is to know Brahman-Atman, and that all his activity should be directed toward that goal. If you accept Vedanta's first two propositions it would seem that you are forced to accept this one, at least in theory. Surely, if Brahman is *Sat-chit-ananda*, everyone must wish to be united with it and find safety? Surely, if Brahman is the true Fact of Life, then to refuse to accept it is to turn one's back on sanity and prefer to inhabit a world of madness? This is what mystics of all ages and races and faiths have held to be self-evident, and this is why they have devoted their lives to the search for union with the Eternal within themselves. Why do the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the earth fail to follow their example?

No Absolute Good and Evil

Even though you have accepted Vedanta's first two propositions, you may still not put the third one into practice, because you are bewildered by *Maya*. Maya is the basis of mind and matter and therefore the stuff of the universe, the effect of which Brahman is the cause. As individuals we exist and perceive and think and act within Maya. Within Maya we are Mr Smith or Mrs Brown. As long as we believe in the absolute reality of our perceptions within Maya, we cannot know the Atman. Maya is multiplicity, Brahman-Atman is one.

If Maya makes us ignorant of our true nature, and if Maya is an effect of Brahman, then is not Brahman evil? Vedanta says that such a statement cannot be made, because evil and good are merely relative concepts, existing within Maya. The question 'Why does God permit evil?' is as meaningless in an absolute sense as 'Why does God permit good?', since it is we who are defining what is good and what is evil. This universe is a place of mixed and changing values, of interaction and evolution. The greatest mystics, such as Ramakrishna (see RAMAKRISHNA), have likened it to a game and laughed at it, not because they were callous toward mankind's suffering or indifferent to its well-being but because they saw the Reality behind the shadow-show. When we ask, 'Why does this ignorance exist, why have we lost awareness of our true nature?', that question cannot be answered either, since it is asked from a standpoint within Maya and the answer lies outside Maya. The mystics who transcended Maya assure us that all is ultimately well; each individual, sooner or later, will free himself from Maya and know his identity with the Atman, and in doing so will realize that his ignorant flounderings in illusion were a necessary part of the game.

How is Brahman-Atman to be known? This has been the main theme of the literature of Vedanta. The principles set forth in the *Vedas* themselves have been elaborated by hundreds of later writers. Among the major classics of Vedanta are the *Bhagavad Gita* (see BHAGAVAD GITA), Patanjali's *Yoga Aphorisms*, Shankara's *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination* and the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. What follows is a digest based upon these four books and several others.

There are four distinct methods or disciplines by which union with the Atman may be achieved. They are called yogas. Yoga is the Sanskrit ancestor of the English word 'yoke', and it means both the act and the method of uniting. A man who practises yoga is called a yogi or a yogin; a woman who does so is called a yogini. The four principal yogas are bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, karma yoga and raja yoga.

Four Ways to Unity

Bhakti yoga is the method of union with the Atman through devotion. It is followed by means of ritual worship, prayer and *japam*. To make japam is to keep repeating one of the names of God – usually one's own mantra (see MANTRA), the name of one's chosen ideal. A rosary is often used in combination with making japam, in order to count out a prescribed number of repetitions. The object of devotional worship is, generally speaking, one of the many aspects of God with attributes, a divine personality or a divine incarnation (avatar). This kind of spiritual exercise is said to be easier than any other, since it only demands that the worshipper shall sublimate his natural urge to love and fix it upon the divine. The vast majority of believers in any religion are fundamentally bhakti yogis.

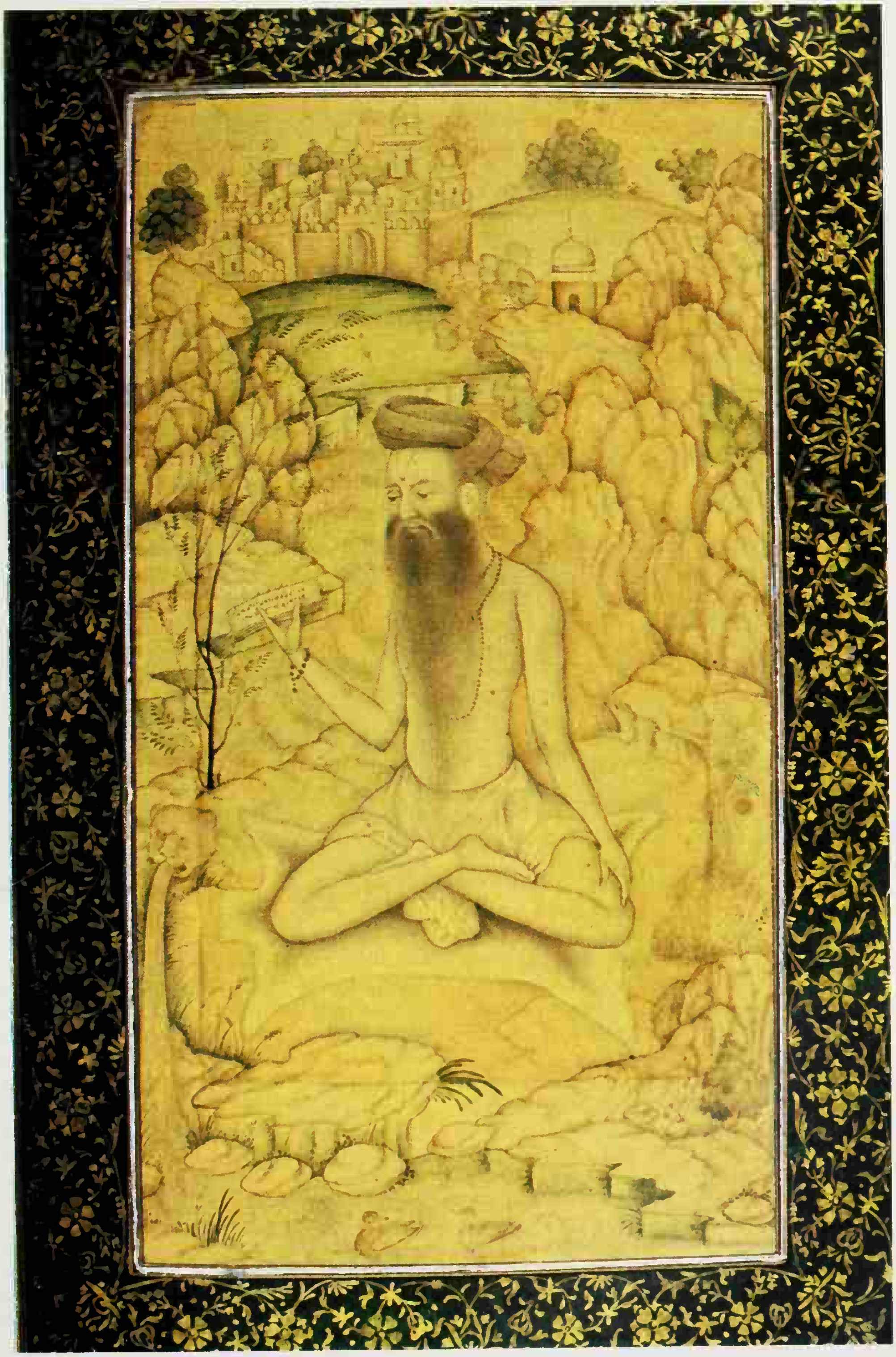
Bhakti yoga leads to ultimate union with the Atman but it does so indirectly, so to speak, achieving non-dualism by a dualistic approach. The devotee may theoretically accept the idea that he is essentially the Atman and yet find it impossible to believe this at first. Looking inward, he can see no farther than his own ego-personality and its defects. Bhakti yoga teaches him, therefore, to look outward and choose some other personality which is more evidently god-like than his own. (The importance of making a definite choice and keeping to it is stressed

Surely, if Brahman is the true Fact of Life, to refuse to accept it is to turn one's back on sanity and prefer to inhabit a world of madness

because the emotions need an unchanging focus. To worship at every shrine is to disperse the emotional powers.) As the worshipper's devotion increases, he begins to understand that the object of his worship is the Atman within himself and one with Brahman; so in the perfected state of yoga, worshipper and worshipped become one.

The bhakti yogi (also called a bhakta) may choose not only the object of his worship but also the particular relationship which he wishes to establish between it and himself. For example, he may take the attitude of servant toward Master, of child toward Father or Mother, of parent toward Child, of friend toward Friend, or of lover toward Beloved. Exponents of all these relationships may also be found among the mystics of the Christian tradition.

Jnana yoga is the method of union through intellectual discrimination, often called the Path of Knowledge. The jnani is non-dualistic: he seeks to reach Brahman-Atman by constant and rigorous analysis of the nature of all phenomena. Instead of using the approach of dualism within Maya in order to transcend Maya, he denies the essential reality of Maya from the outset. His watchwords are 'not this, not this', as he continually reminds himself that the apparent universe is other than Brahman-Atman. The jnani hopes to discover the Reality by a process of elimination. He makes use of the intellect just as the bhakti makes use of the emotions. This explains why bahkti yoga is for the many and jnana yoga for the few. The pursuit of jnana yoga calls for tremendous willpower and mental clarity. The jnani, by dispensing with devotion and the aid of a chosen ideal, makes his path much harder for himself. Yet there are those who are temperamentally suited to jnana and who might otherwise not embrace religion in any form. The path of jnana



Above left Worshippers at a shrine sacred to Krishna; in the foreground musicians are singing devotional songs. Bhakti yoga is said to be the easiest kind of spiritual exercise, 'since it only demands that the worshipper shall sublimate his natural urge to love and fix it upon the divine' *Right* Yoga, particularly raja yoga, includes physical as well as mental disciplines: an ascetic performs his devotions by the banks of a river, seated in the lotus position – a technique of yoga

Robert Skelton

What is Joy?

What is joy?

Think of a young man, well read, ambitious, firm, strong, noble; give him all the wealth of the world, call him one unit of human joy.

Multiply that joy a hundred times, and call it one unit of the joy of those brought to the celestial choir by their good deeds. A man full of revelation, but without desire, has equal joy.

Multiply that joy a hundred times, and call it one unit of the joy of choir-born spirits. A man full of revelation, but without desire, has equal joy.

Multiply that joy a hundred times, and call it one unit of the joy of the fathers, living in their eternal paradise. A man full of revelation, but without desire, has equal joy.

Multiply that joy a hundred times, and call it one unit of the joy of heaven-born gods. A man full of revelation, but without desire, has equal joy.

Multiply that joy a hundred times, and call it one unit of the joy of gods brought to godhead by their good deeds. A man full of revelation, but without desire, has equal joy.

Multiply that joy a hundred times, and call it one unit of the joy of ruling gods. A man full of revelation, but without desire, has equal joy.

Multiply that joy a hundred times, and call it one unit of the joy of Indra, god of Power. A man full of revelation, but without desire, has equal joy . . .

He who lives in man, He who lives in the sun, are one.

He who knows this, cries goodbye to the world; goes beyond elemental Self, living Self, thinking Self, knowing Self, joyous Self. Here is my authority:

'He who knows the spiritual joy mind cannot grasp nor tongue speak, fears nothing.'

The Ten Principal Upanishads
trans. Shree Purohit Swami and W. B. Yeats

yoga appeals to the intellectual agnostic.

Karma yoga is the method of union through selfless work. Karma means a mental or a physical act, and also the consequences of that act (see KARMA). In a long-term sense, it means the sum of the consequences of all the acts performed by an individual in this and in previous lives. An individual's karma is made up of his *samskaras*, the tendencies or potentialities which are created in his mind by his actions and thoughts. Thus one karma motivates another, bringing with it happiness or unhappiness or a mixture of both. The samskaras make up what, at any given moment, we call the 'character' of an individual, but no one is helplessly in their power. An individual can always begin to modify them by performing acts and thinking thoughts which are contrary to their tendency. Thus a man's karma can be changed, for better or for worse.

According to Vedanta, it is karma which drives the individual soul, after death, to seek rebirth in a new body. The theory of reincarnation is therefore inseparable from the theory of karma. But the individual can free himself from this cycle of birth-death-rebirth through realization of his oneness with the Atman. When the Atman is known, the law of karma ceases to operate.

Work for Work's Sake

To work selflessly is to work sacramentally, offering every action and its results to God. This means in practice that every action must be performed to the very best of one's ability, since it is an offering to God; and that the doer must have no desire for any resulting fame or other material advantage and no fear of unpleasant consequences. He works, as the *Gita* says, 'for the work's sake only and not for the fruits of work', without fear and without desire.

Properly speaking, the karma yogi must perform every action according to this principle, even when the act is performed in solitude and without reference to other people. For the karma yogi must regard himself as the witness of his actions and not as the doer. He identifies himself with the Atman, and not with the physical and psychological drives which cause the action. But in general, the path of karma yoga is followed by rendering service to mankind through education, medical care or some other type of social work. The karma yogi is reminded, however, that he is not really benefiting mankind by his service: to believe that he is doing so is to lapse into delusion and vanity. All action is really symbolic, for how can Brahman-Atman help, heal or harm Brahman-Atman? The yogi who seemingly helps others is actually helping himself, for his efforts are bringing him nearer to union with the Atman. Therefore he is told to bow down in gratitude to those who accept his service.

To speak of an action creating 'good' or 'bad' karma is to raise the question: in what manner does the law of karma relate to ethics? One may say that the Christian concept of sin is generally dualistic. The Christian thinks of himself in relation to a personal Father-God. A sin is an act of disobedience and ingratitude toward this Father. If the Father punishes it, that is only right and proper. Meanwhile the sinner begs his forgiveness and tries to feel sincere contrition. The Vedantist, being a non-dualist, is taught to regard sins as obstacles which he himself has placed in the way of his own enlightenment. He has not offended a divine Father; he has done himself an injury. He is not expected to feel contrition and beg for forgiveness; he is expected to resolve not to make the same mistake again. The danger of the Christian approach is that it may lead to exaggerated self-loathing and hence to weakness and despair. The danger of the Vedantist approach is that it may lead to a self-indulgent permissiveness.

Each one of us, considered as an individual within Maya, has different virtues and weaknesses; each has varying duties according to the way of life he has chosen. This natural duty is called *dharma*. The *Gita* warns us never to undertake the dharma of another person but to prefer to die doing our own duty. The dharma of the individual determines what is 'right' or 'wrong' for him at that particular stage in his growth. What is right for him at one period in his life may be wrong for him at another. Acts of desire and fear must be harmful because they put a man into greater bondage. But problems of conduct are seldom easy. No act in itself can be regarded as absolutely right or wrong, under all circumstances, for all individuals. The act can only be evaluated in relation to the search for union with the Atman.

Royal Yoga

Raja yoga, meaning literally royal yoga, is the method of union through the practice of meditation. It is followed by a systematic training and controlling of the mind, concentrating it one-pointedly on the Atman until complete absorption is achieved.

Raja yoga is also concerned with the study of the human body as a vehicle of spiritual energy. According to Patanjali whose *Aphorisms* is the classic textbook on the yogas, there is an immense reserve of this energy situated at the base of the spine. It is called the *kundalini*, meaning 'that which is coiled up' (see KUNDALINI); hence it is sometimes referred to as 'the serpent power'. In normally unspiritual people, the kundalini is seldom and only partially aroused. The aim of raja yoga is to arouse it fully. In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, which is a record of his teachings, Ramakrishna explains that the mind dwells only in the lower centres of consciousness as long as it remains attached to the objects of worldly desire. When, through the practice of yoga, the kundalini is aroused and has moved up the spine to the centre of the heart, man experiences his first spiritual awakening. If the kundalini can be made to ascend farther, to the centres of the throat, the forehead and the top of the head, man becomes enlightened.

It may be admitted that raja yoga is primarily for those who are prepared to lead predominantly contemplative lives; its techniques are too exact and thorough to be practised amidst the distractions of a busy life in the world. But its description of human physiology has great significance for us all. It teaches that there is no sharp division between mind and matter: the two are interrelated within a process which may be thought of as a series of superimposed coverings, the outermost increasingly material, the innermost increasingly mental or subtle. Furthermore – and this is a most important lesson for the puritan – there is no sharp division between pure and impure, between spirit and flesh. The same energy, the power of the kundalini, is expressed in physical appetite, sexual desire, artistic creation, compassion for others, the longing for God and finally the highest spiritual experience.

The disciplines, usually known as the 'eight limbs', of raja yoga are: *yama*, the

Robert Skelton

practice of truthfulness, continence, abstention from greed and the exploitation of others for one's own gain; *niyama*, mental and physical purity, contented acceptance of one's lot in life, performance of ritual worship, practice of japam, devotion to God, study of the scriptures; *asana*, choice of a suitable place and a correct posture for meditation; *pranayama*, control of the vital energy through the practice of breathing exercises; *pratyahara*, withdrawal of the mind from sense-objects; *dharana*, holding the mind within a centre of spiritual consciousness inside the body or fixing it upon a divine form; *dhyana*, an unbroken flow of thought toward the object of concentration (this is often compared to pouring oil from one vessel to another in an unbroken stream); *samadhi*, the superconscious state in which man experiences his identity with the Atman.

'The process of knowing the Atman is . . . a process of ceasing to identify yourself with the ego-personality'; to this end the sannyasin, meditating by the river in the holy city of Benares, has renounced all material possessions

Samadhi is the goal of the Vedantist and of many other practising mystics; Buddhists call it Nirvana and Christians the Mystic Union (see MYSTICISM). There are degrees of samadhi – in the lower samadhi, some sense of duality still remains – but samadhi is always a state of superconsciousness in which, to quote Patanjali, 'the true nature of the object shines forth, not distorted by the mind of the perceiver'.

For convenience, the yogas have to be described one by one, but of course they are not to be thought of as mutually exclusive. Indeed nobody can practise any one yoga to the absolute exclusion of the others. To call oneself a bhakti, a jnani, a karma or a raja yogi is merely to define one's general approach to yoga. But discrimination without devotion is ultimately sterile, devotion without discrimination must degenerate into shallow emotionalism, some meditation is necessary even for the most active, and no human being can avoid action altogether. A classical simile likens man's character to a bird in flight: love and knowledge are its two wings, meditation is its tail.

(See also BREATH; HINDUISM; YOGA.)

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

Vedas

Hindu sacred texts, consisting primarily of the *Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sama-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda*; incorporating three main strata, in order of date, the *Samhitas* (hymns), the *Brahmanas* (manuals of ritual and prayer) and the *Upanishads* (philosophical treatises); the language of the Vedas is Vedic, a form of Sanskrit; the word *veda* means 'wisdom' or 'knowledge'.
See HINDUISM; INDIA; VEDANTA.

VEDDAS

THE VEDDAS, a primitive forest tribe of Ceylon, and the numerous ethnic groups of similar physical appearance represent one of the most archaic surviving racial types of Asia. They are of slight build and small stature, with dark brown skin colour and wavy or curly black hair. The forehead is low, the eyes are deep set under heavy ridges, the nose is short and broad and often depressed at the root, the lips are full and the chin tends to be receding. Some of the jungle tribes of Southern India closely resemble the Veddas, and it can be safely assumed that all these populations are remnants of an ethnic stratum which during the late Stone Age extended over large parts of Asia.

When at the end of the 19th century the Veddas were first studied by Western scholars, they were found to live solely by hunting and collecting, dwelling in caves surrounded by jungle. Excavations proved that these caves had been inhabited by people of the late Stone Age, and much points to the assumption that the Veddas are the direct descendants of the Stone Age cave-dwellers whose roughly flaked stone implements lie only a few inches below the surface. The cultural evidence from these cave deposits coincides largely with what is known about the style of life of the modern Veddas, and this too suggests that in the wooded highlands of Ceylon there was an unbroken cultural sequence from the Stone Age to the present time.

The traditional style of Vedda life persisted until the first quarter of the 20th century, when the British anthropologist C. G. Seligman undertook a study of this ancient people. The majority of Veddas had already been partly assimilated to the Sinhalese peasantry, but there were still groups of Veddas who led a semi-nomadic life in the forest and used rock shelters as habitations. The average Vedda community consisted then of about five families, who shared the rights of hunting over a tract of land within which they gathered honey, edible roots and tubers, fished in streams and used natural rock shelters. But the whole of the community did not commonly move about its territory as one band.

Each group exercised property rights over a clearly defined territory, and there was a tradition that in the old times an intruder entering the land of another group without the owners' permission would have faced death. Membership of a group descended through the female line, and it was customary for a man to join his wife's group on marriage and live in their territory. As the membership and size of a group changed from generation to generation territorial boundaries also changed, and the whole system of land holding was extremely elastic.

As the inroads of peasant cultivators restricted the hunting grounds of the Veddas, many of them had to seek new means of subsistence. Most took to a simple form of shifting cultivation, clearing small patches in the forest and planting millet, maize and various vegetable crops. They also acquired some cattle, and gradually adapted themselves to the way of life of small-scale cultivators. Today there are no true forest Veddas left, and the Ceylonese government has provided facilities to aid the process of transition from semi-nomadic hunting and food-gathering to settled agriculture. But although there is no longer an essential difference between the economies of the Veddas and other backward rural communities, the Veddas remain culturally outside the society of the Buddhist Sinhalese.

Corpses Left in Caves

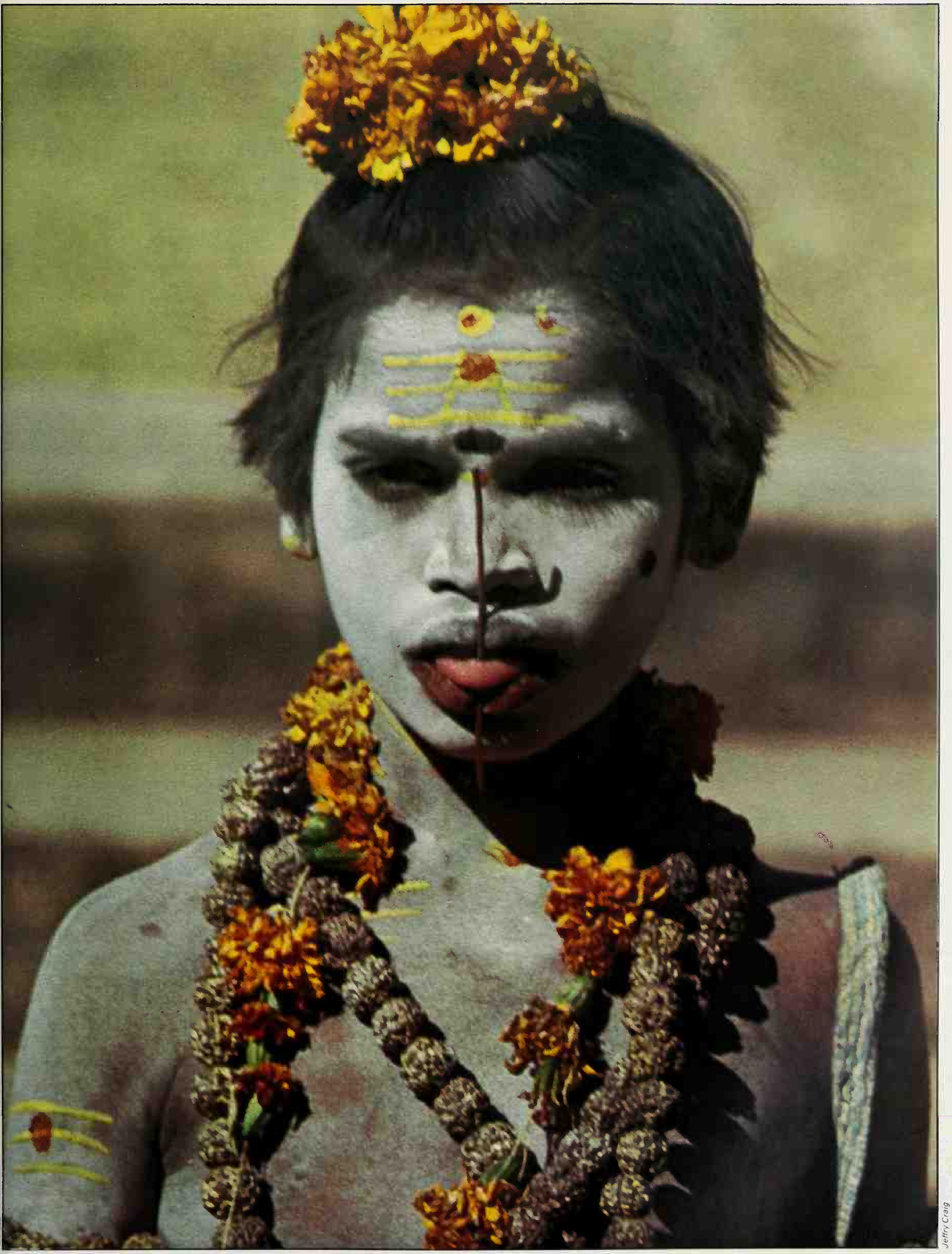
When they were first studied, more than half a century ago, the religious practices and beliefs of the various groups of Veddas proved to be of great complexity. It was impossible to isolate any body of beliefs which could be regarded as the original Vedda religion: while the material aspects of Vedda life seemed to reflect a fairly accurate picture of conditions among South Asian food-gatherers of the Stone Age, the same could hardly be claimed of the religious phenomena met among the Veddas. Some customs, however, are certainly of considerable antiquity. For instance, the funeral practices of the forest Veddas present a striking contrast to Sinhalese practice. When a man or woman died from natural causes the body was left in the cave or rock shelter where the death occurred, and was covered with leaves and branches. The cave was then abandoned for some time but could be reoccupied later, when the remaining bones were thrown out unceremoniously. An alternative method of disposal of corpses was burial in a simple grave dug by the brothers or other close kinsmen of the deceased. While most graves were not marked and no objects of any kind were buried with the departed, the spirits of the dead were treated with great respect and were given offerings of food.

There is a belief, still current among Veddas, that for a short time the spirit of a dead man remains near the site where he died, but later on joins the company of the ancestor spirits. These spirits are known as *yakku*, the same term which the Sinhalese employ for demons. The Veddas believe that life in the realm of the yakku remains the same for all time: that is, they are not reborn in a different shape. Although there are male and female spirits they are 'like the wind' and do not have sexual relations. Some Veddas say that all yakku lead a more or less similar life, but others believe that even among the yakku 'good people' occupy a higher and 'bad people' a lower position. The good yakku are helpful towards the living, while bad yakku are liable to harm their surviving kinsmen. Acts of violence, even the harsh treatment of a dog, annoy the ancestor spirits and endanger those who have aroused their wrath.

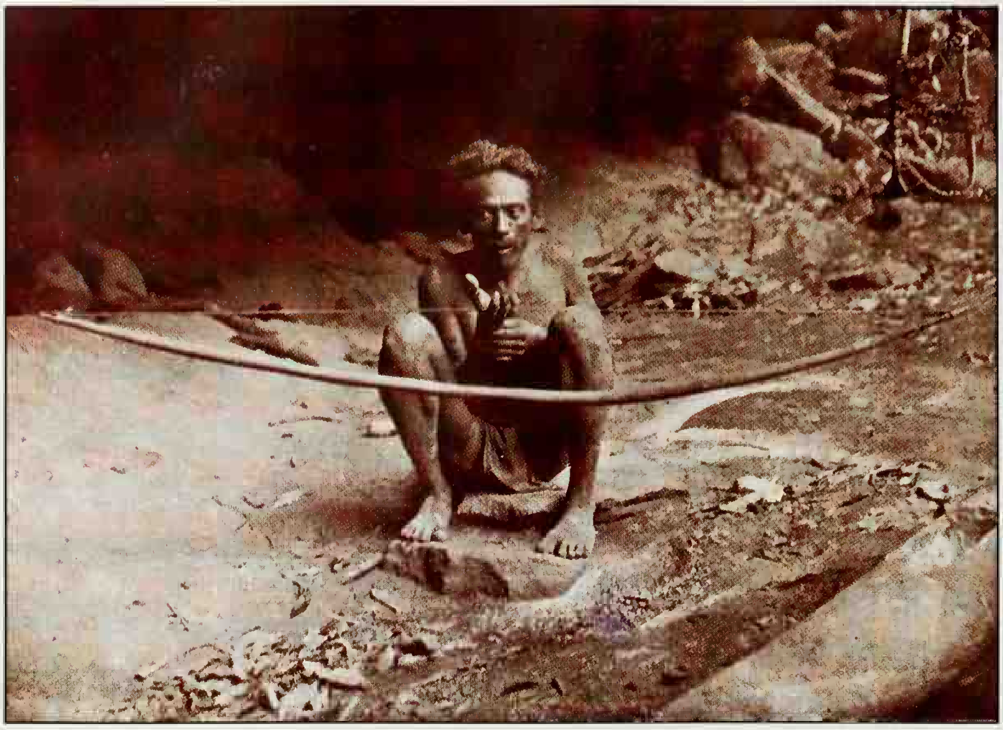
Distinct from the ancestor spirits are spiritual beings also described as yakku but named according to localities. These yakku have the character of local deities and are associated with certain features of the landscape. Some of them are believed to control wild animals; when Veddas were still mainly hunters, they used to cut off the head of whatever game they had killed and leave it in the forest as an offering to the gods of the chase.

In most Vedda communities there is one man who has the power and the knowledge to establish contact with the ancestor spirits and the nature deities. At ceremonies when the spirits of the dead are given offerings of food, one of them may possess this priest and, speaking through his mouth in hoarse guttural accents, declare that he approves the offerings and that he will assist his kinsmen in hunting, often stating the direction in which a hunting party should go. Each priest trains his

The Veddas are one of the oldest surviving racial types of Asia, preserving elements of the culture of their cave-dwelling ancestors



Jeffry Craig



Seligman: The Veddas, 1911

Seligman: The Veddas, 1911

Illustrations from C. G. Seligman's *The Veddas* (1911) *Left* To determine the cause of an illness, a Vedda recites an invocation: when the spirit causing the sickness is named the bow should swing to and fro *Below left* Group of Veddas: semi-nomadic hunters, they would offer a portion of each kill to the spirits

successor, and the pupil learns to repeat the invocations of spirits recited at ceremonies.

The method of invoking spirits is essentially the same in all Vedda ceremonies: an invocation is sung by the priest and often by the onlookers, while the priest dances round the offering prepared for the spirits. Special veneration is accorded to two spirits, known by individual names, who are believed to exercise control over other spirits and who must sanction any assistance which those under their authority give to men. These two spirits were specially invoked in order to obtain game, and when hunters had been successful, pieces of flesh from the neck and chest of the animal were roasted in the ashes of a fire and offered to them before being consumed by the Veddas. It was believed that if part of the meat was not presented to the spirits, the hunters would experience bad luck in future and might even be attacked by wild animals.

Contacts between Veddas and Sinhalese must occasionally have occurred ever since the latter, emigrants from Northern India, settled in Southern Ceylon in the 6th century BC. As free hunters the Veddas were accorded a high status by a society which greatly valued martial qualities, and traditions tell of various unions between members of the Sinhalese nobility and Vedda girls. The memory of such associations is reflected also in Sinhalese mythology. Kataragama, one of the most renowned Sinhalese deities, who presides over an important temple and centre of pilgrimage, is said to have fallen in love with Valliamma, the daughter of a Vedda chief; to this day Valliamma is worshipped as Kataragama's mistress and has a shrine of her own in the temple grounds, which is not inferior to the shrine of Kataragama's legitimate divine consort. Thus the Veddas, though gradually losing their tribal identity and merging with the Sinhalese peasantry, continue to figure in folk beliefs and mythology as the oldest indigenous inhabitants of the island.

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

Within the darkness of the pharaohs' tombs, 'mummies' filled with Nile mud and planted with corn sprouted with new life: the decay and resurrection of the seed-corn, personified in a vegetation god, was invested by ancient man with a deep religious significance

VEGETATION SPIRITS

THE EARLIEST human beings known to us, those of the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age (c 30,000 to 10,000 BC), are generally designated 'food gatherers' by anthropologists; for they either found their food in the form of nuts, berries and roots, or they hunted animals for it. During the succeeding Neolithic or New Stone Age a great transformation of economic activity occurred, which has aptly been called the 'Neolithic Revolution'. Man gradually changed from being a 'food gatherer' to being a 'food producer'. The two basic factors in this change were the invention of agriculture and the domestication of animals. The origins of agriculture have been much debated by scholars; but no generally agreed conclusions have yet been established about how and where this momentous change in human economy was first achieved. We can only speculate about the likely places (for example, the ancient Near East), where wild corn-bearing grasses might first have been purposely planted and tended by man.

This revolution in his economy had a profound effect upon man's life and thought. It led to the establishment of settled communities, from which emerged the first towns and cities; it prompted the formation of the first calendars, since seed-time and harvest had to be predicted; and it promoted the invention of writing and a scribal class, as agrarian transactions grew more complicated and required the keeping of accounts and records. The beginnings of all these institutions have been discerned in the ancient Near East.

But the change to an agrarian way of life also deeply affected man's religious ideas. As an agriculturist, he became intimately involved with the annual cycle of Nature's life. He realized that his existence and well-being depended upon the yearly miracle of the germination of the seed-corn, upon its steady growth and the increase of its fruits until harvest. The process of the seasons took on a new significance for him. He saw it as an annual drama of life and death. For in the Near Eastern lands the cycle of Nature's year has the aspect of a dramatic contest between the forces of life and death. Spring comes quickly, clothing the landscape in verdant green, bedecked by flowers. Under the increasing power of the sun the corn quickly ripens to harvest. But as summer advances and no rain falls, vegetation withers and dies, and the ground seems cursed with sterility and death. Yet from this seeming death, vegetation awakens again next spring to a new life, and the miracle of Nature's resurrection provides mankind once more with food.

Son and Lover

But the early peoples of this area saw in the annual rebirth of vegetation a significance deeper than that of the assurance of their food. For them the truth it intimated was twofold, and inevitably they interpreted it in mythic imagery. The idea of a 'Great Goddess', who was the source of all living things, seems already to have found expression in the Paleolithic era in the many carvings of the female form, showing the maternal attributes grossly exaggerated while the facial features were undelineated (see EARTH; FACELESS GODDESSES; MOTHER GODDESS). This primitive conception of the 'Great Goddess' was naturally associated with the earth, from which all forms of vegetation grew and within which the dead were laid. The vegetation was thus the offspring of the Earth Mother, and it was easily personified as a divine spirit that manifested itself in the trees and grass, and in the corn.

Hence developed the idea of a divine couple who embodied the fecundity of the earth and the crops which it bore, and upon which man's life depended. But the imagery of mother and son did not completely portray the whole complex of Nature's annual cycle. To give birth to vegetation, the Earth Mother had to be impregnated. A variety of imagery suggested itself: the plunging blade of the plough or the fall of rain. Some lines from the *Danaids* of the Athenian dramatist Aeschylus (c 499–458 BC) significantly portray the anthropomorphic images in which the ancient Greeks envisaged the process: 'Love moves the pure Heaven to wed the Earth; and Love (*Eros*) takes hold on Earth to join in marriage. And the rain, dropping from the husband Heaven, impregnates Earth, and she brings forth for men pasture for flocks and corn, the life of men.'

From such sexual imagery emerged the concept of a virile god who impregnated the Earth Mother with his seed. The form of this deity could vary between the animal and the human. The bull provided an obvious type-figure, and at Catal Hüyük, the oldest known sanctuary (c 6000 BC) of the Great Goddess, frescoes of bulls and bulls' horns signified the incorporation into her cult of the principle of male virility. In Greek mythology Zeus, in the form of a bull, carried off Europa, and the Minotaur (half-man and half-bull) was the offspring of the Queen of Crete, Pasiphae, and a divine bull. In these 'faded myths' were probably preserved folk-memories of the associated cults of 'Great Goddesses' and sacred bulls. (See BULL.)

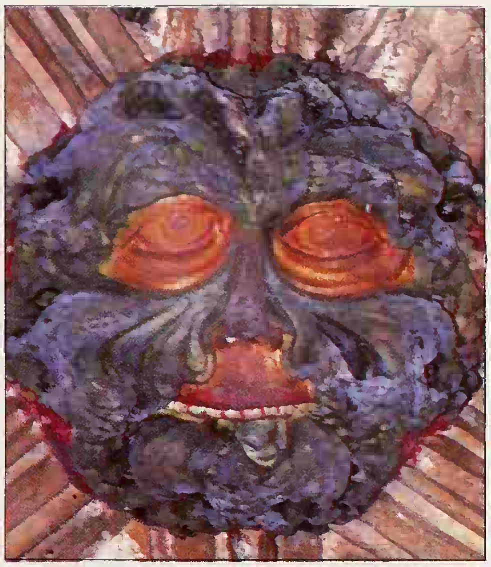
Mythic thought is characteristically imprecise, and it easily embraces ambivalent or contradictory ideas. So it is not surprising to find, in many myths of the ancient Near East, a male deity who is both the son and the lover of a fertility goddess. An example of such complex imagery is succinctly expressed in a title of the Egyptian god Amun-Re, descriptive of his relation to the goddess Nut. 'Bull of his Mother, the first on his field', he impregnated the goddess who gave him birth.

In his role of vegetation god, the offspring of the Earth Mother, this ambivalent male deity was also a 'dying and rising god' (see DYING GOD). For he personified the annual death of vegetation in the fierce summer heat and drought of the Near Eastern lands, and its resurrection in the spring. As such he became the subject of a complex of myth and ritual. Lamentations commemorated his death as the vegetation withered and died; ceremonies were performed to ensure his return from death; and joyous festivals acclaimed his resurrection as the new green of reviving vegetation appeared in the spring. From this basic drama of death and resurrection, manifest in Nature each year, there stemmed a rich tradition of idea and fantasy which embodied some of the deepest of human emotions – the instinct for life and the fear of death, sexual love and motherhood, the pathos of early death, aversion from the withering touch of time, aspiration for the assurance of immortality.

Life in the Tomb

The ancient Egyptian god Osiris (see OSIRIS) has been regarded by some scholars, most notably by Sir J. G. Frazer, as the classic example of the dying and rising god of vegetation. Subsequent research has not endorsed the view that this was the original character of Osiris; but the deity certainly became closely associated with fertility and the death and resurrection of the corn. This association was graphically portrayed in Egyptian art and ritual. The dead Osiris was frequently depicted lying supine, with phallus erect and plants sprouting from his body. A similar idea inspired other scenes representing the goddess Isis, in the form of a falcon, impregnating herself on the phallus of the dead Osiris. The meaning of such depictions seems clear: Osiris, as the deification of Nature's life-cycle, retained his fertility even in death, from which he triumphantly rose again.

A more spiritually significant idea motivated the making of 'corn-mummies', which were placed in tombs. The specimen found in the tomb of Tutankhamen consisted of an image of Osiris, constructed of wood and linen, which had been filled with mud from the Nile and planted with corn. It was bandaged like a mummy and placed in a wooden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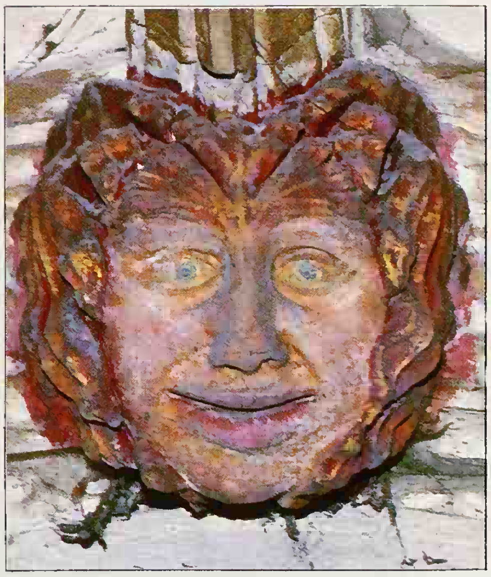
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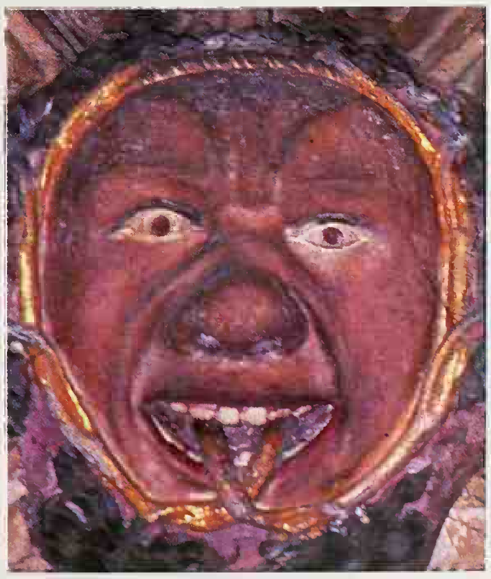

Ronald Sheridan

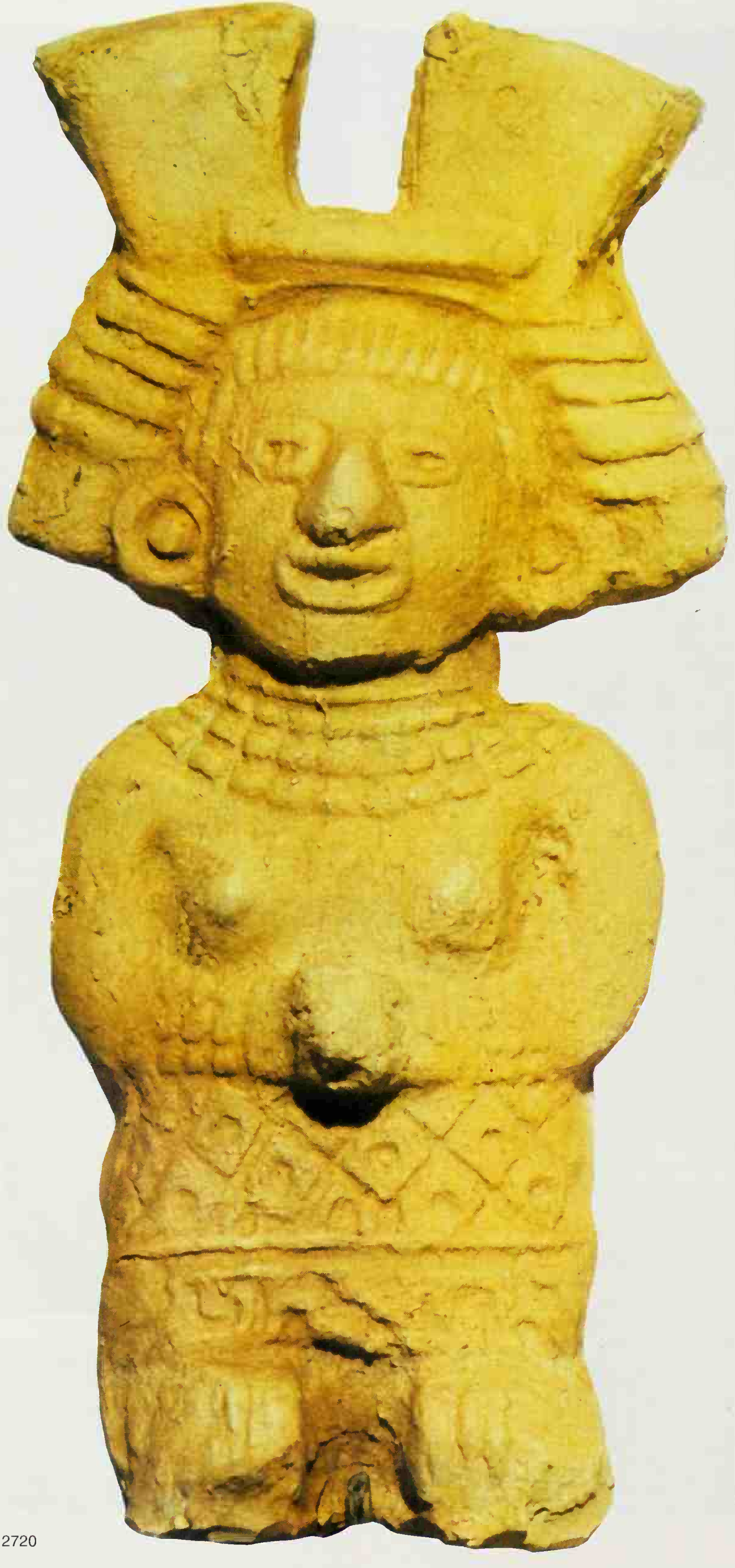
The 'foliate heads' in many medieval churches, depicting a human head covered with foliage, or with leaves and tendrils sprouting from the mouth and ears, are evidence of our ancestors' concern for the spirit of vegetation. 'No inscriptions explain their meaning; doubtless they needed none for people whose lives were so closely bound up with the fields and woods': painted roof bosses from Canterbury Cathedral box. Enclosed in bandages and coffin, the seeds in this particular example could not have germinated as they did in less elaborate versions, which sprouted with corn in the warm darkness of the tomb, symbolizing the renewal of life after death. But it is probable that they were intended also to assist, by means of imitative magic, in achieving the resurrection of the dead person, buried in the tomb, to a new life.

The significance which the death and rebirth of the seed-corn, personified in a vegetation god, had for man's hope for immortality, invested the annual drama of the alternation of life and death in Nature with a deep emotive significance. The hope which the corn-mummies signified to the ancient Egyptians was presented anew for Christians in the well-known words of St Paul: 'But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? with what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain . . . So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable . . . It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body' (1 Corinthians, chapter 15).

Baal Avenged

The mystique of the annual death and resurrection of vegetation is seen in its clearest and most dramatic form in the cult of Osiris. But the mythologies of other ancient Near Eastern dying and rising gods better illustrate the connection between the god of vegetation and the fertility goddess: those of Adonis (see APHRODITE), Tammuz (see TAMMUZ), Baal and Attis.

'Baal' was a title meaning, in Hebrew, 'possessor' or 'lord' of the land (see BAAL). It was used to designate the Amorite god Hadad ('the thunderer'), who personified the winter rains and their accompanying storms. Since the rain was recognized by the Canaanites as an essential factor in the fertility of the fields and the growth of vegetation, Baal was identified with vegetation in its annual cycle of life and death. The mythology of Baal has become known through the discovery of texts, inscribed on clay tablets, at the site of the ancient city of Ugarit, on the Syrian coast north of Beirut. In these texts, which date from the latter half of the second millennium BC, a triad of deities is concerned in the drama of Nature's year. Baal's sister and lover is the fertility goddess Anat, who is generally depicted nude, with the sexual attributes emphasized. The enemy of Baal is Mot, who is the



Michael Holford

The worship of the god of vegetation was associated in many agricultural communities with that of the goddess of fertility or Earth Mother; the god might be thought of as both her son and lover, issuing from her womb, to die and rise again in due season *Left* Aztec Earth Goddess, Coatlicue *Right* Head of an Aztec maize god, the 'flayed god' Xipe Totec, a form of Tezcatlipoca, who died by being skinned alive so that men might receive the maize; his priests wore the flayed skins of their victims to symbolize the rebirth of the crops

personification of drought and sterility, and hence of death.

Owing to the fragmentary state of the tablets, it is difficult to reconstruct with certainty the myth which described the relations of these deities. It would seem that Baal, for some obscure reason, had to descend into the realm of Mot. Before departing, he had intercourse with a heifer, from which a bull-calf was born: this bestial act may perhaps relate to the association of a bull cult with Baal, which was a feature of the fertility rites of the Great Goddess, already noted.

The disappearance of Baal caused sterility: 'the furrows in the fields are cracked with drought'. Anat took vengeance on Mot for the death of her lover. Seizing Mot, she 'ripped him open with a sword, winnowed him in a sieve, burnt him in the fire, ground him with two mill-stones, sowed him in a field'. This punishment inflicted on Mot has a curious significance; for it parallels the fate of the corn – some being ground into flour for bread; some being sown as seed. What the action signified in the myth is uncertain; but consequent on it, Baal returns to life. It is possible that since Mot had apparently devoured Baal, the sowing of fragments of Mot, intermixed with Baal, caused the resurrection of the dead god of vegetation. The revival of Baal is symbolized in the myth by poetic imagery: 'the heavens rained oil, the ravines ran with honey'. These myths probably served as a kind of libretto to fertility rites, performed each year to assist the germination of the seed-corn and ensure a good harvest. The licentious nature of such Canaanite rites, involving as they did sacred prostitution, was vehemently denounced by the Hebrew prophets.

Youthful Lover

Attis was the youthful lover of Cybele, the great mother goddess of ancient Phrygia (see CYBELE). The spring festival of the goddess was mainly a ritual commemoration of the death and resurrection of Attis. There are variant versions of the myth accounting for his death, which seems to have resulted from self-castration. It is difficult to make out a coherent myth and ritual complex from these versions and the rites associated with the cult of Cybele and Attis. The fact that the pine was sacred to the young god might indicate that originally he was a tree spirit; it is interesting in this connection to note that an episode in the legend of Osiris concerns a marvellous tree that quickly grew and enshrined his body. Cybele was served by eunuch priests called *galli*, who were reported to have buried their severed parts in the earth, perhaps to promote the fertility of the Earth Mother. Similarly suggestive are the repulsive rites of the *criobolium* and the *taurobolium*, in which a ram and bull, symbols of male virility, were sacrificed, their blood providing a regenerating baptism for initiates into the mysteries of the goddess (see BAPTISM).

Some scholars have claimed to find in many religions of the ancient Near East a definite 'myth and ritual' pattern connected with the life-and-death cycle of vegetation. According to them, the king represented the vegetation god at the New Year festival, in which the death and resurrection of the deity was ritually enacted in a series of related episodes. These comprised, besides a dramatic representation of the death and resurrection of the god of vegetation, the recitation or symbolic representation of the myth of creation; a ritual combat, in which the triumph of the god over his enemies was portrayed; a sacred marriage; and a triumphant procession, with the king playing the part of the god, followed by a train of lesser gods.

This 'myth-and-ritual' complex, so it is explained, originated from a primitive custom of killing the king when his physical vigour began to diminish; for, since the fertility of the land was magically connected with his virility, it would be disastrous to have an aged impotent monarch. His youthful successor ensured the continuance of the fecundity of the soil by his marriage with the queen or high priestess. These barbaric rites, it is argued, had been gradually transformed into a ritual death and resurrection of the king, which was celebrated each year. In the subsequent sacred marriage, the queen or priestess represented the fertility goddess. The case for the existence of this 'myth and ritual' pattern has not been generally accepted by scholars as proven. But much evidence concerning the reaction of the ancient peoples of the Near East to the death and rebirth of vegetation does suggest that their kings were deeply involved in the annual fertility rites.

Return of the Corn Maiden

In ancient Greece, the famous Mystery cult of Eleusis witnesses to the mystic significance that men there found in the annual drama of the seed-corn (see DEMETER; ELEUSIS). The two deities connected with this cult differed notably, however, from those of the Near Eastern cults. Instead of a naturally interdependent pair of fertility goddess and vegetation god, the Eleusinian divinities were related as mother and daughter. Demeter, the corn goddess, was the mother of Persephone, the corn maiden. The myth of the abduction of Persephone by Plouton, the lord of the underworld, provided the rationale or explanation of the secret rites performed at Eleusis (see PERSEPHONE; PLUTO). Distracted by the loss of her daughter, Demeter forgot her task as the corn goddess. So the ground grew sterile and famine afflicted the race of men, until the supreme god Zeus was obliged to intervene and bid Plouton restore the corn maiden to her mother. But the restoration could not be complete, because Persephone had tasted a morsel of food in the underworld. Zeus ruled, in consequence, that Persephone should spend two parts of the year above ground with Demeter and one part in Hades with Plouton. The return of Persephone brought fruitfulness again to the fields, which soon waved 'with long ears of corn, and its rich furrows were loaded with grain'. There has been much speculation as to the exact significance of this division of the year between Persephone's stay with her mother and with Plouton,

Michael Holford

but it is generally agreed that the division relates to the life cycle of the seed-corn – perhaps to the time the seed lies buried in the ground until its emergence in the fresh vigorous upsurge of life in the following spring.

In the Eleusinian Mysteries the death and resurrection of the seed-corn was undoubtedly interpreted as presaging a rebirth to a new and immortal life for those who were initiated. Very little is known of the rites which were performed in the great Telesterion or Hall of the Mysteries at Eleusis; but there is evidence that the culminating revelation made to the initiate, who had been subjected to experiences simulating death, was that of 'a reaped cornstalk'. The meaning of the symbol must surely have then been apparent to him, and perhaps that meaning implied an insight similar to that ascribed to Christ in St John's gospel (12.24): 'unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit'. However that may be, the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, which records the Eleusinian myth, ends with the assurance: 'Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is uninitiate and who has no part in them, never has lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.'

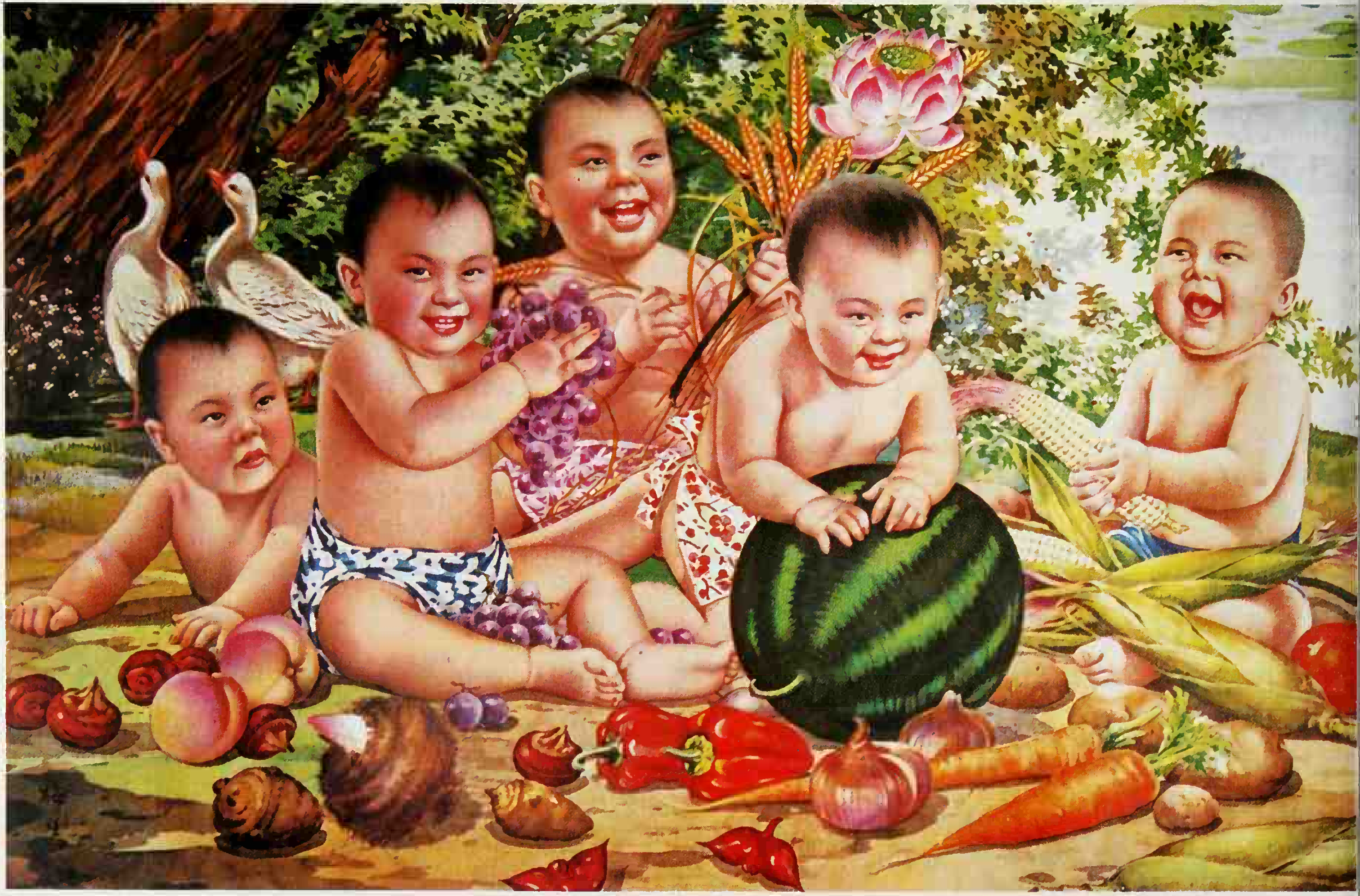
It was Sir James George Frazer who first showed, in *The Golden Bough*, the enormous influence that agriculture has had upon religion. The titles of some of the volumes that make up the work significantly indicate aspects of the theme: *The Dying God; Adonis, Attis, Osiris; Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild.* In the first volume of the series, *The Magic Art*, Frazer evokes, in a masterly passage, the memory of the mysterious priest-king who served the goddess Diana in her sacred grove at Nemi (see KING). This sinister being bore the title *Rex Nemorensis*, the 'King of the Wood'. Whoever was bold or desperate enough to challenge the 'ghastly priest', proclaimed his challenge by breaking off a bough of the sacred tree – the 'golden bough', according to certain ancient writers.

The Green One

Frazer set himself the task of explaining this strange institution. After a long and involved investigation of ancient literature and folklore, he conclude that 'at Nemi the King of the Wood personated the oak-god Jupiter and mated with the oak-goddess Diana in the sacred grove'. Originally this priest-king was named Virbius, which Frazer translated as 'the Green One'. The sacred union of Virbius and Diana, or the priestess who impersonated the goddess, was intended 'to make the earth gay with the blossoms of spring and the fruits of autumn, and to gladden the hearts of men and women with healthful offspring'. Frazer identified the mystic Golden Bough with the mistletoe which, growing on the oak, was believed by ancient peoples to be the life or soul of the tree (see MISTLETOE).

In his quest for the origins of the priest-king of Nemi, Frazer was led to investigate a widespread cult of tree spirits which has been practised in northern lands to make the corn grow. The custom of the Harvest May, observed by various peasant peoples of Europe, is particularly notable. A large branch of may or hawthorn was brought home with the last load of harvest, and decorated with ears of corn. Sometimes it was fastened to the roof of the farmhouse, remaining there for a year, or planted in the cornfield, with the last sheaf tied to it. To those who made it, the Harvest May evidently embodied or represented the spirit of vegetation, upon whose fructifying influence next year's harvest depended.

It was from this primitive belief in vegetation spirits that the custom of the maypole took its origins. The maypole, which the Puritan writer Phillip Stubbes perceptively, if humourlessly, condemned as a 'stinking idol', was the symbol of the vegetation god. The institution of the May Queen, so essentially associated with the maypole, preserves an ancient folk-memory of the sacred marriage to promote the fertility of the herds and fields. In the May Day customs the spirit of vegetation was also represented by the Green Man or Jack in the Green. At Knutsford in Cheshire, the Green Man still leads the annual procession of the May Queen –



The growth of vegetation was often interpreted in human terms, as the result of a cosmic sexual act: human fertility continues to be associated with the fertility of Nature, in a modern Chinese poster showing the prosperity to be expected under Communism

a strange and somewhat eerie figure, completely enveloped in greenery (see GREEN; MAY DAY).

Frazer collected a mass of evidence from the folklore of many lands expressive of a sense of tragedy at the time of harvest. Sometimes the last sheaf of corn has been ritually threshed and treated as a sacrificial victim, recalling perhaps a human sacrifice that was once made on the harvest field to the god of vegetation. The fate of the corn in its transformation to bread has also been seen as the passion of the Corn Spirit. A Danish folktale describes the sufferings of the rye: 'In the autumn you will be sown, deeply buried in earth; in the spring you will rise; in the summer you will be parched in the sun, drenched in the rain, then cut and dried, carted to the barn and threshed; then, carted to the mill and ground.'

Today in many medieval churches the so-called 'foliate heads' still witness to our ancestors' concern for the spirit of vegetation. These strange emblems, carved in wood or stone, depict a human head with leaves and tendrils sprouting from the mouth and ears.

There are no inscriptions to explain their meaning; doubtless they needed none for people whose lives were so closely bound up with the fields and woods. A faint memory of these old beliefs lingers on in the 'corn dollies' made for harvest festivals (see HARVEST). They are the last relics of a tradition that reaches far back to the dying and rising gods of the ancient Near East.

(See also FERTILITY; TREES.)

S. G. F. BRANDON

FURTHER READING: J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (St Martin's Press, 1980 reprint); E. O. James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess: Seasonal Feasts and Festivals* (Barnes and Noble, 1959 and 1963 respectively); E. O. James, *The Tree of Life* (Brill, Leiden, 1966); S. H. Hooke ed., *Myth Ritual and Kingship* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1958); John C. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Attic Press, 1978); G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1961); Findhorn Foundation, *Findhorn Garden* (Harper & Row, 1975).

VENUS

C. M. Dixon

The Italian Venus was identified with the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, who was the mother of Aeneas and so an ancestress of the Roman people: the 'Venus of Rhodes', Greek sculpture of the 1st century BC

THE WORD *Venus* is related to English 'wish' and, more remotely, 'win'. The Latin common noun means 'charm', 'attraction', 'delight'. Its derivative verb *venerari*, which in antiquity also meant 'venerate', primitively signified the sacral act of alluring or enticing something from beyond mankind's power. Thus a famous literary echo of an old prayer reports the formal enticement of willingness from the god Quirinus (*veneror horam Quirini*). The goddess who sprang from the abstract *venus* forever kept the skill of wheedling.

Rome's foremost expert in religious history, Varro, was struck by the absence of Venus's name in the oldest records. Indeed Venus could not boast an old priesthood or festival or shrine at Rome. Further, Venus was unique in Italy. Etruscans spoke of Turan, 'Lady'. In the Oscan dialect the comparable goddess was Herentas, very similar in concept because the name is related to the aforementioned Latin 'willingness' and to English 'yearn'. There is reason to believe that Venus had not even been universal to the Latins of central Italy. She seems especially Roman and thus contrasts with Jupiter whom all the Indo-European speakers knew, or with Mars who, though native to Italy, was shared by all peninsular inhabitants (see JUPITER; MARS).

Most of Venus's cult remains unknown to us. Some Romans insisted that the month of April was named after Aphrodite, her Greek equivalent. However, this folk etymology was based on the cult of Venus on behalf of vegetable gardens. As early as the late 3rd century her name signified the garden produce itself. The Romans consecrated gardens to Venus on 19 August, and vegetable gardeners kept the day holy.

There is no certain answer as to why Venus was related to the Vinalia, two wine ceremonies in the civil calendar on 23 April and 19 August. These festivals belonged to the sky god Jupiter. Aside from the coincidence of their worship on days of the Roman Vinalia, there is some Campanian evidence of a state cult of Venus Jovia. This worship can be construed in one of two ways. Either Venus is already identified as Aphrodite whom Zeus (Jupiter) fathered according to one Greek myth (see APHRODITE), or the goddess originated as the sky god's *venus* or, to use the local term, *herentas*. Of course, vineyards do not greatly differ from gardens. Also, in a sense, all plants need to be coaxed or wheedled to put forth their fruits. Such coaxing may be enacted by sexual representation. Be that as it may, no clear and direct evidence of such religious practice emerges from the ancient evidence on Venus.

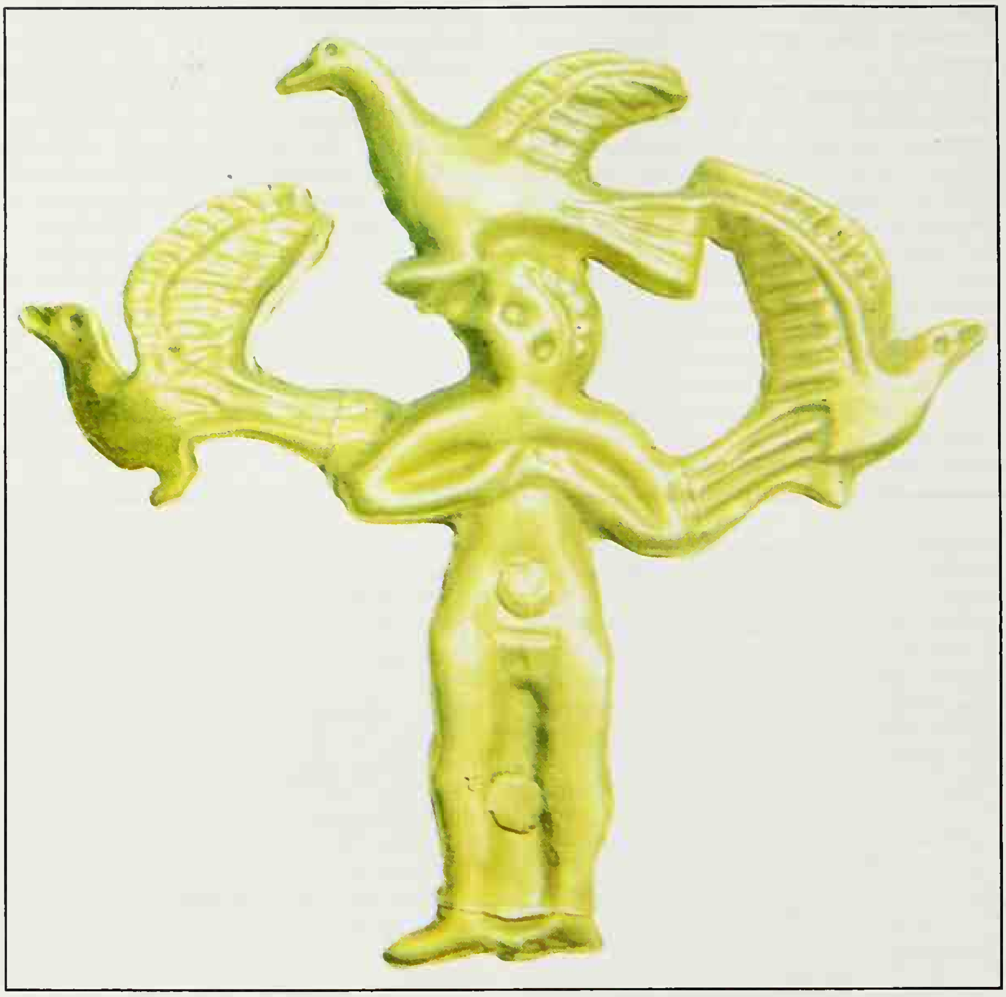
Produce and Prostitution

At least as early as 290 BC, Venus was somehow associated with the August Vinalia because her first temple was dedicated on that day by a patrician, Fabius, who had built it with fines exacted for ladies' debauchery. Although it stood at least 600 years, this temple's activities are rarely mentioned. Venus's epithet Obsequens, 'compliant', and the source of the building funds point to an already existing identification of the goddess with the Greek Aphrodite and the Etruscan Turan, who were definitely goddesses of female sexuality. Despite the sexual aspects of both the cult title and the ladies' misbehaviour, Fabius had a personal reason for the choice of his piety. He claimed that Venus had submitted to the wishes (*obsequi*) of his father and himself. The two Fabii had fought together in several campaigns against the Samnites and after the last Samnite war Venus Obsequens received her temple. Unfortunately, we do not know whether the Samnite Venus was worth conciliating in war.

Venus perhaps exercised some political sway among the Latins, for there existed two large precincts a few miles south-west of Rome where Aphrodite or Frutis, sometimes called Venus, were annually worshipped by all the Latins. One or both shrines, purportedly of great age, may have actually been related in cult to the widely renowned goddess of Mt Eryx on the western tip of Sicily. The Erycine sexual goddess was variously identified with Aphrodite and the Phoenician Ishtar (see ISHTAR). The Latin Frutis was said to have received her cult statue from Erycina.

One tradition explicitly equated Venus Erycina to the Aphrodite who bore Aeneas. Accordingly, the Trojan hero gratefully transported her cult to Cyprus, to Sicily and to Latium. Aphrodite occasionally had the epithet *Aineia*, which was interpreted to commemorate her maternity. The maritime route of Aeneas's legendary wanderings can be traced from one to another of Aphrodite's shrines. Some place-names of the western Italian coast preserved indications of Aphrodite in her role as protector of seafarers. Venus inherited these places as Roman rule spread.

After successive humiliations from Carthage's great general Hannibal, a direct descendant of the two Fabii observed what seems a family tradition and dedicated a temple to the true Venus Erycina in 215 BC. By this gift Fabius and the Romans placated a deity who had protected Carthage during the earlier Punic war and who was also an ancestress of the Roman people, through Aeneas who came to Latium and founded Romulus's line (see FOUNDING OF ROME). Venus Obsequens had received her temple at roughly the same time as the Romans first reared a statue group of



Ronald Sheridan

Left Gold votive figure of a Mycenean love goddess, with birds; doves were sacred to Venus *Right* A goddess of gardens and pot vegetables, Venus became the embodiment of female allure and sexuality: *Venus* by Titian

Romulus and Remus being suckled by the she-wolf. Venus Erycina had been integrated into the Roman tradition of their non-Italian ancestry. Consequently Rome's Capitoline Hill, reserved for truly Roman gods, allowed a site for Venus of Eryx.

Venus is certainly connected with the month of April by the dedication in 181 BC of a third temple on the earlier Vinalia of 23 April. This Venus, another Erycina, had been promised a temple during a war with the Ligurians of northern Italy, whom the Romans reckoned distant relatives of the Sicilians. Situated just outside the city, the new shrine reproduced the very temple on Mt Eryx where temple prostitution still thrived. Rome's Erycine precinct attracted the city's less savoury residents. On 23 and 25 April prostitutes and the offspring of prostitution and pimping kept their holy days here. Late April and early May had become holidays given over to sexual promiscuity and stage plays. Since the 3rd century such rites, introduced under the influence of the Greek Sibylline Books, had been consecrated to Flora, spirit of blossoming. They had their likely model in the cult of Aphrodite Antheia (Flora in Latin). For centuries the Floral Games provided notorious spectacles of sexual licence. Venus herself was not directly worshipped with Flora; nevertheless as divinity of produce and prostitution Venus belongs to the same kind of religious mentality.

The Sibylline Books reinforced the association in 114 BC, when the Romans were prompted to dedicate a temple to Venus Verticordia, 'Turner of Hearts'. Her name was intended to commemorate the acquittal of two Vestal Virgins charged with breaking their vows. Whatever the intent of the title, which is supposed to suggest the conversion from lust to chastity, Venus clearly retained her latent power of coaxing.

Political Promotion

Through Cornelius Sulla, who briefly engrossed the Republican government by his dictatorship of 82–79 BC, Venus entered the realm of personal politics. Sulla, also her devotee in other ways, adopted the style *Epaphroditos*, 'Aphrodite's darling', which he rendered *Felix* in Latin. The latter style, which he may also have applied to a Roman Venus, comprised all notions of fertility, prosperity, success and good luck. At Pompeii a coastal colony of Sulla's veterans accorded Venus unusual prominence. The Pompeian cult perhaps combined Sulla's patroness with the town's continuing adoration of Venus Physica, Venus of Nature (*physis*), which preserved the Greek idea of growth.

In 55 BC Pompey the Great dedicated a temple to Venus Victrix 'the Winner', atop his theatre, which was the first permanent theatre in Rome. Opposition to its construction was probably blunted by the consecration to Venus. At about the same time, Rome's great poet Lucretius published his philosophical poem on Nature, in which he invoked for poetic inspiration Venus, ancestress of the Aenead race, and which he dedicated to Memmius whose clan corporately worshipped Venus.

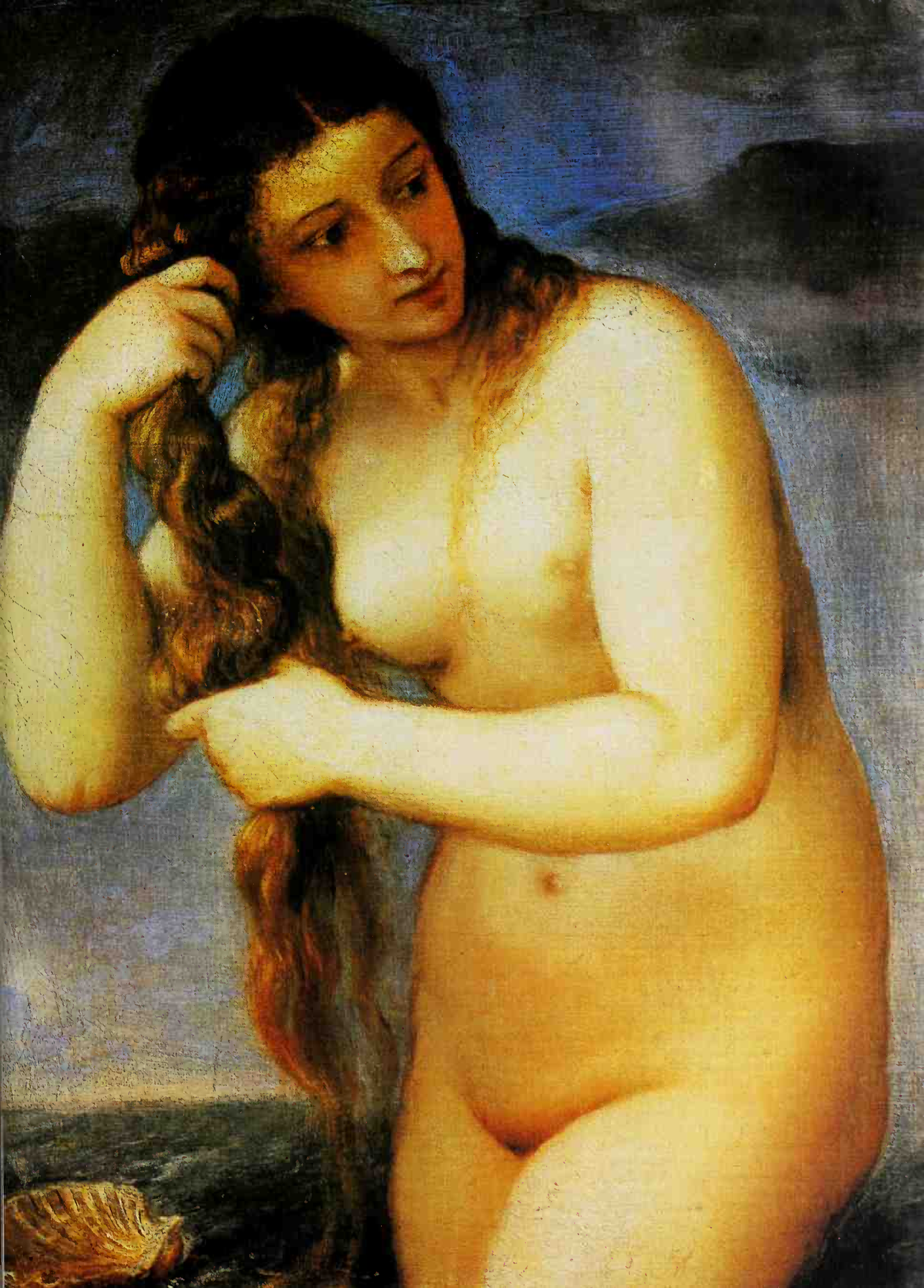
The patrician clan of Julii asserted ever stronger proprietary rights of ancestral cult for Venus since they claimed direct descent from Iulus, the Trojan son of Aeneas. Julius Caesar surprised no one by emphasizing his clan's rise to power in his own person by vowing a temple to Venus Genetrix during the battle of Pharsalus, at which Pompey was defeated. Caesar raised the temple (perhaps the first built entirely of marble at Rome) in his new forum and dedicated it in 46 BC, although his adopted son Augustus completed the work. Beside the statue of his ancestress Caesar set a golden statue of Cleopatra.

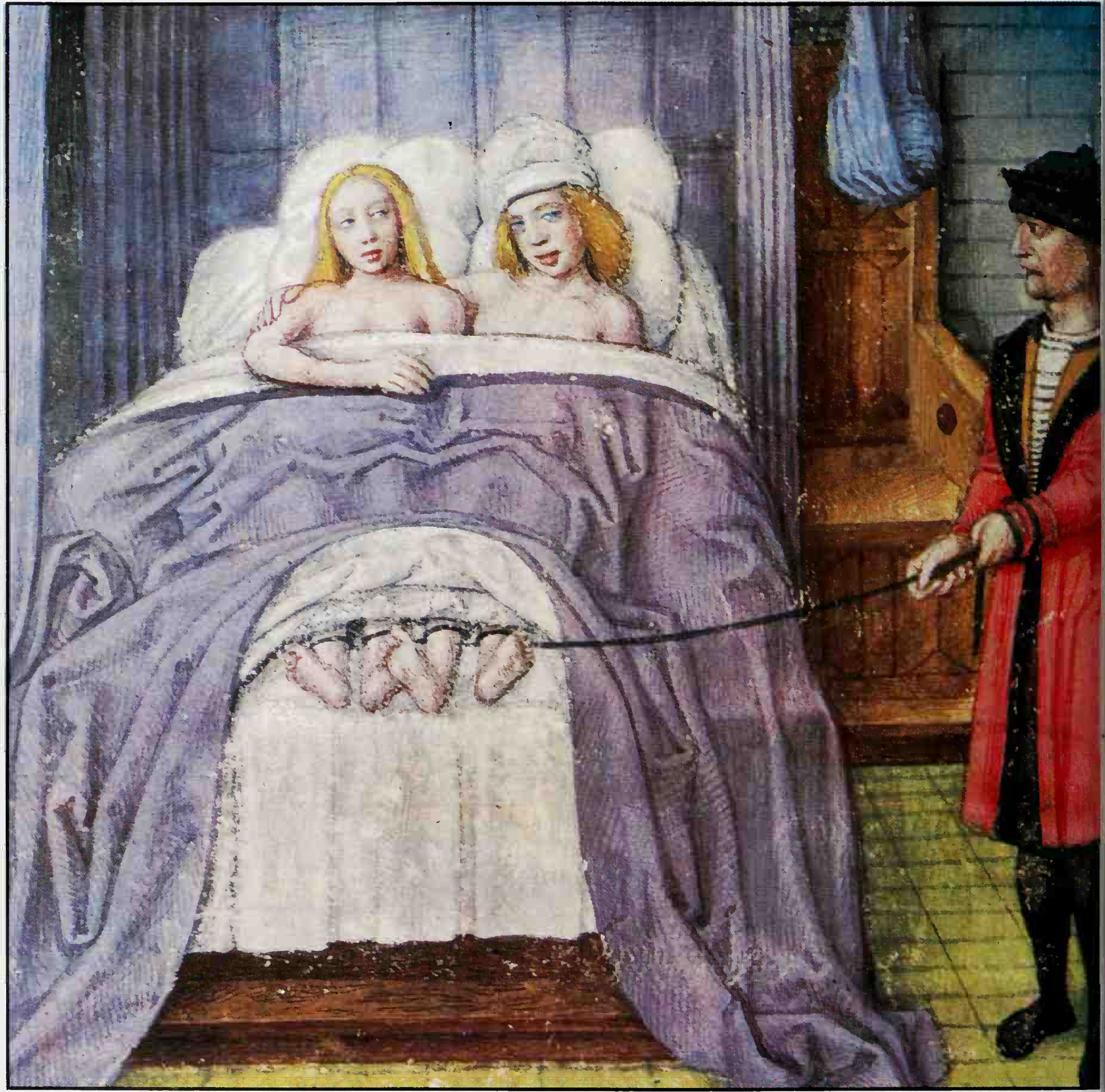
In the Greek East subject provincials joined Aphrodite with deified Rome in a religious demonstration of loyalty to the Empire and to the imperial house which Caesar had generated. Ultimate expression of the catholic loyalty of the Empire is met during the reign of Hadrian (117–128 AD). This emperor of Spanish birth devoted himself to the adornment of Rome, Italy and the Empire, whose ideal he generously cultivated with lovely and magnificent buildings. Hadrian did much to accord the provincials a sense of merit for their role in the Empire's government. To amplify his notion of imperial unity Hadrian built Rome's largest and handsomest temple to Venus and Roma, which he situated beside the Colosseum. Adoration of Roma, a provincial concept, remained unique to this temple. Each goddess had her own precinct placed back to back. By universal usage this double temple was referred to as the City's Shrine. Hadrian chose to dedicate the temple on 21 April, the feast of Parilia, in order to honour Venus in her month and Roma on her birthday in the city's 888th year.

At Rome Venus was worshipped under other cult names. Most of these are easily understandable; Placida, 'pleasing'; Alma, 'nurturing'; Pudica, 'demure'. A few are most obscure, for instance Calva, 'bald' The goddess's popularity extended throughout Italy and the Latin-speaking western Empire. She invited identification with lesser local divinities and found herself acquainted with universal notions. Thus she provides other examples of the Roman capacity to enlarge the concept and identity of their gods.

The Dead and the Sewers

Near the great cemetery on the Esquiline Hill once stood a holy grove called Libitina where corpses were prepared for burial. The profession of undertaker was also *libitina*. Cult for and in groves was quite common but a grove cult for the dead was extraordinary. By the Imperial age the Grove of Libitina was no more than an address, and very probably just the name of a street. From the name of the grove, or from that of its tutelary deity, the Romans thought up a goddess Libitina. At some later point they could not intellectually tolerate the





The myths associated with Venus were taken from the Greek myths of Aphrodite: Venus is caught in bed with Mars by her husband Vulcan, in a 15th century Flemish illustration from *The Romance of the Rose*

plethora of insignificant divinities. Perhaps the very distaste for the subject of funerals had prepared the Romans to believe Libitina governed sexual desire (*libido*); thence the easy next step carried them to apply Libitina to Venus and to rear a temple to this goddess of lust. The word Libitina seems to have entered Latin from Etruscan, where it meant 'dead'. Libitina was not necessarily an Etruscan goddess, but a euphemism for death and its sequel.

Another example of a latterday Venus can be derived from a known locality. In early times the Romans knew the Little Aventine Hill as Mt Murcus. The valley between the Aventine and Palatine Hills was named the Murcia and was ultimately given over to the construction of the enormous Circus Maximus; this embraced a number of old religious sites, among which was an altar to Murcia. Murcia shared her name with the turning posts at that end of the racecourse. Being overwhelmed physically by the affairs and structures of the Circus and her link with the locality having been forgotten, Murcia became the subject of learned speculation. Her name was derived from the Greek *myrtea*, 'myrtle'. Since this shrub was sacred to Aphrodite, Murcia came to be another name for Venus. With the discovery of her new identity Murcia's cult seems to have perished.

Next and more perplexing is the case of Venus Cloacina. *Cloaca* is the Latin word for sewer. In uniformity with the need for a deity to oversee every place and structure a shrine to Cloacina was put up in the Forum over the Cloaca Maxima, the town's main sewer. The Romans fancied that cloaca was derived from a verb of cleansing Further, they supposed that the goddess of cleansing must be Venus, because the loca plant used for sacral cleansing was the same as the myrtle. Finally, both Cloacina's shrine and Murcia's altar were situated over running water. This Venus was humanly represented and her statue held a flower of some kind. By involutions peculia to the ancient mind Venus became mistress of funerals, racecourse turning posts and sewers.

A last instance of Venus's acquisition of alien functions illustrates another Roman religious peculiarity. When the Romans entered Carthaginian Africa, they readily acknowledged the native goddess Venus Caelestis, 'heavenly' Venus. The existence of an obscure Greek deity, Aphrodite Ourania, perhaps promoted the Romans' acceptance of Caelestis. At any rate the ground was soon prepared for the introduction of the planetary week and the convictions of astrology. In the wake of these innovations Venus lent her name to the sixth day of the new week which still keeps alive Mesopotamian astrology in Italy, France and Spain, where Ishtar's planet is commemorated in Venus's day. Our own Friday is just a further step in the equation. 'Friday's child is loving and giving!'

The Roman Venus exhibits different modes of divinity. From first to last her state cult contributed to the grandeur of the Empire and the glory of certain élite clans. Venus goddess of pot-vegetables gave way to the Venus of female sexuality, whose myth and cult are based upon Greek and oriental precedents that became peculiarly Roman only insofar as they included accounts of Aphrodite as the mother of Aeneas. Whatever else the cult of the abstract *venus* had once contained, the aspect of charm and allure was transferred to a female goddess of procreation.

R. E. A. PALMER

Venus the Planet

The Babylonians connected the morning and evening star with the goddess of love, and so did the Greeks and Romans, possibly because its appearances mark the limits of night, the time of love-making. Venus is the only planet named for a female deity and its astrological symbol is widely used outside astrology as a symbol of the female, the corresponding male symbol being that of Mars, the god who was the lover of Venus in classical mythology.

In astrology Venus is traditionally the ruler of love and desire, beauty and relationships – not confined to sexual partnerships but extending to relationships with friends and in business. It is also considered essentially beneficent, a force making for harmony, reconciliation, peace, affection, love of beautiful things, physical attractiveness. The position of Venus in your birth chart is thought to affect all these matters, but especially your ability to enter into relationships with other people and your attitudes to beauty, the arts, and the pleasures of life. If Venus is fortunately placed, it should tend to produce a warm, gentle, sympathetic, graceful and artistic person, contented, tactful and probably rather sentimental. The planet is particularly associated with music and is said to produce composers and musicians.

If not so fortunately placed, the influence of Venus may be less harmonious. The old belief was that Venus in conjunction with Saturn and Mercury in a horoscope threatened death by the treachery of a woman or by poison, traditionally the woman's weapon, but this has been reinterpreted by at least one modern authority to mean the threat of being dominated by a woman, or women, in life. It is often said that a man born when Venus is close to the Sun in the zodiac is likely to be effeminate, his character (Sun) being unduly influenced by the feminine planet. Saturn square to Venus, as in Hitler's horoscope, is supposed to indicate selfishness and egotism.

The influence of Venus on love-life varies with its placing in the zodiac. According to Margaret Hone's *Modern Text Book of Astrology*, a person who has Venus in Taurus will be 'steadfast in love, but possessive' and 'slow to make partnership but reliable when once settled'. Venus in Gemini, however, means that 'affection is changeable and often for more than one at a time', and if Venus is in Scorpio 'love tends to be more intense, more sexual, more secretive and passionate'. Venus in the eighth house, incidentally, is a good sign, traditionally foretelling an easy death.

In magic the force of Venus is connected primarily with love and sex, and with fertility and the teeming life of Nature. Copper, as the metal of Venus, is useful in love charms, and operations of love, lust, pleasure and friendship should be timed in the hour and day of Venus (see CORRESPONDENCES; DAYS; FORCES).

FURTHER READING: For the Roman goddess, see G. K. Galinsky, *Aeneas, Sicily and Rome* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1969).

In 1901, visiting the Petit Trianon – a building in which the ill-fated Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, had lived before the French Revolution – Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain apparently stepped back in time to the year 1770

VERSAILLES ADVENTURE

THE STORY published under the title *An Adventure* in 1911 has been described by one of its critics as 'the arch ghost story of all time'. It is the account of the experiences of two English women, Miss C. A. E. Moberly and Miss E. M. Jourdain, who were both of academic standing and unimpeachable integrity.

The story began in 1901. While they were staying together in Paris for a short visit, they went on 10 August to see, for the first time, the Petit Trianon at Versailles. They knew very little about the place, beyond the fact that Marie Antoinette had lived there for some years before 1789. They came away that afternoon having seen in the garden persons and features, seemingly real at the time, but afterwards found to have been inappropriate to the circumstances of 1901.

They did not discuss the matter until a week had elapsed, when they came to the conclusion that the place was haunted. Three months later they discovered, on talking over the events of the August visit, that their recollections did not in all respects agree with one another. They accordingly decided to write independent accounts and these, with minor alterations and additions, constitute the main narratives of *An Adventure*. Both accounts are commendably brief, occupying only some five pages and four and a half pages respectively.

About the same time, November 1901, Miss Jourdain heard from a French friend that Marie Antoinette was regularly seen on a certain day in August sitting outside the garden front of the Petit Trianon. The conclusion was quickly reached that the haunting had to do with Marie Antoinette, and all later researches and visits were directed to the task of reconciling their recollections of the 1901 visit with what was known of the background of Marie Antoinette's time.

There have been five editions of *An Adventure*, and each one has elicited from reviewers and others fresh solutions of the mystery. For instance, it has been suggested that the two visitors on 10 August 1901 failed to take in their surroundings at all accurately, because they were too much engrossed in conversation, or overcome by unaccustomed French food and wine. They may have seen men in long coats of old-fashioned appearance, who were really Robert de Montesquiou and his friends, who were alive in 1901, holding a costume party in the garden of the Petit Trianon, and have mistaken them for 18th century gardeners.

One critic expressed surprise that people still paid any attention to the story, considering that Miss Moberly had confessed on her death-bed that it was a hoax. But this allegation was never substantiated and Dr Joan Evans, who knew both the ladies well, denied that any such confession had been made.

Time Out of Joint

Whatever influences may have been at work to bemuse or mislead the two visitors on 10 August 1901, the fact remains that their descriptions of what they saw on that afternoon cannot, without making extravagant assumptions, be reconciled with the surroundings as they were either in 1901, or in the time of Marie Antoinette. Their descriptions may, of course, have been pure fantasy. But it is a curious fact that the visitors, apparently without realizing the significance of what they saw, described some garden features characteristic of the period of the 'Anglo-Chinese garden', a fashion which was at its height in the early 1770s. A first attempt by the present writer to date the visions from internal evidence put the year at 1774, but later research by A. O. and M. E. Gibbons pointed to an earlier date for them, 1770.

Briefly, the visitors, in the course of a walk of a few hundred yards, saw and described eight features which were manifestly 'wrong' for 1901, and can be shown by pictures and plans to have been 'wrong'

What They Saw

From Miss Jourdain's description:

'We walked for some distance down a wooded alley, and then came upon the buildings of the Grand Trianon, before which we did not delay. We went on in the direction of the Petit Trianon, but just before reaching what we knew afterwards to be the main entrance I saw a gate leading to a path cut deep below the level of the ground above, and as the way was open and had the look of an entrance that was used, I said, "Shall we try this path? it must lead to the house," and we followed it . . .

'. . . there was a feeling of depression and loneliness about the place. I began to feel as if I were walking in my sleep; the heavy dreaminess was oppressive. At last we came upon a path crossing ours, and saw in front of us a building consisting of some columns roofed in, and set back in the trees. Seated on the steps was a man with a heavy black cloak round his shoulders, and wearing a slouch hat. At that moment the eerie feeling which had begun in the garden culminated in a definite impression of something uncanny and fear inspiring. The man slowly turned his face, which was marked by smallpox, his complexion was very dark. The expression was very evil and though I did not feel he was looking particularly at us, I felt a repugnance to going past him.'

Earlier, Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain had asked the way from two men in greenish clothes and three-cornered hats. They saw a cottage with stone steps, a woman and a little girl. They saw the man in the dark cloak, his face marked with smallpox. Then a man with long dark hair directed them to another path and they crossed a stream by a rustic bridge. When they reached the Petit Trianon, Miss Moberly saw a woman in a large shady white hat with sketching paper.

for 1789. All eight features, as shown by garden plans and documents, make sense in relation to the surroundings of the year 1770.

The idea that the two visitors may have had a 'glimpse of the historic past' does not rest solely upon the *Adventure* story. There are a few stories of a similar kind which have so far defied attempts to explain them away. Each story, taken separately, can be criticized on grounds of deferred reporting, poor documentation and lapses of memory. But if, as here, the person who has had the experience has thereby acquired knowledge about the past which could only have been acquired normally by research, it is unreasonable to assume that research had been previously carried out but had been forgotten.

The alternative hypothesis, that the correspondences between vision and fact were due entirely to chance, seems implausible in a case where there were so many 'hits' on the target and no manifest 'misses'.

It is disappointing that so little is known about the day-to-day life at the Petit Trianon in the years 1770–74, and there is no certain clue to the identity of any of the persons who were seen on that August afternoon. But to the lover of beautiful buildings there is some compensation in the thought that the two visitors may have seen the Petit Trianon in its perfection, as it came from the hand of the architect, before its surroundings had been marred by the demands and whims of a later generation. The reader's verdict, however, should be founded not on sentiment but on the evidence of the visions themselves, examined against the recorded history of the house and garden.

G. W. LAMBERT

FURTHER READING: The 5th edition of *An Adventure* was published by Faber & Faber in 1955, with a useful preface by Dr Joan Evans. For the 'dating', see A. O. Gibbons ed, *The Trianon Adventure* (Museum Press, 1958). See also Lucille Iremonger, *The Ghosts of Versailles* (Faber & Faber, 1957); Andrew Mackenzie, *The Unexplained* (Arthur Barker, 1966).

R. G. Foord

VERVAIN

WHAT WE CALL vervain today is *Verbena officinalis*, an insignificant plant. But vervain is also identified with a plant, now unknown, which was important in classical times. Pliny called it *sacra herba*, the sacred herb, and other classical names applied to 'verbena' included Cerealis, Demetria, Persephonion, Mercury's Blood, Tears of Juno or of Isis, all of which suggest a close link with fertility ceremonies. Besides using it in religious rites, the Romans kept evil spirits from their homes with it, and made it into charms to ward off bodily harm. Ambassadors and heralds parleyed with enemies wearing a 'verbena' crown. Roman witches employed it too, as the poet Virgil notes.

In ancient Persia 'vervain' branches were carried in rites associated with sun worship, while its juice was used by magicians: smeared on the body, it enabled one to gain the affection even of an enemy. Cutting of vervain was done when neither sun nor moon were visible, and honey was poured on the ground as an offering in exchange. Similar observances are recorded of the Druids, who made special use of the plant in prophecy. During the 18th century revival of interest in Druids, the finding of vervain anywhere near a stone circle convinced antiquarians of the monument's druidical past.

In medieval times, when *Verbena officinalis* took over from the unknown classical plant, its religious importance diminished in relation to its use by herbalists and sorcerers. Charms of all kinds, including love potions, were made with vervain. It was something of a cure-all, used as an amulet, especially against snake-bite and accident, and recommended for dozens of different ailments from cancer to plague, the 'bloody flux' to piles. Tumours could be dealt with by cutting a vervain root in two, hanging one round the sufferer's neck and smoking the other over a fire. As this shrivelled the tumour was supposed to do likewise. If the smoke-shrivelled part was retained by an ill-disposed person and placed in water, the tumour would return as the root swelled up.

Vervain kept away witches and their works, as many authors testify, and was frequently used in conjunction with dill, and also rue. This did not stop witches from themselves making use of vervain, so much so that it was called the Enchanter's Plant. It was one of the plants supposed to open locks magically: a thief would embed a fragment of the leaf in a cut made in his hand, and would then only have to touch a locked or bolted door or chest to open it.

Vervain was associated with St John's Eve, 23 June (see ST JOHN'S WORT), when bonfires were lit while, to quote a contemporary poem,

> . . . young men round about with maids
>   do dance in every street,
> With garlands wrought of Mother-wort,
>   or else with Vervain sweet.

Frazer relates how in Germany, in the 16th century, the chaplets of mother-wort (mugwort) and vervain were finally thrown onto the St John's Eve bonfires. On this night also, protective garlands of vervain, often mixed with flax, were hung in houses.

The use of vervain as a love philtre and securer of affection has been recorded within the last century, together with its use against illness. In Germany a wreath or hat of vervain was placed on a bride's head, harking back to classical times when the plant was sacred to Venus and the bridal wreath was picked by the bride herself. In the Victorian language of flowers, vervain stands appropriately enough for enchantment.

Vesta

Roman goddess of the hearth, equivalent of the Greek Hestia: worshipped at home as the deity of the family hearth, her public cult was conducted in a circular shrine, the 'hearth' of the community, where a perpetual fire burned, tended by the Vestal Virgins; her favourite animal was the ass.
See HEARTH.

Vestal Virgins

Priestesses of the sacred fire of Vesta in Rome; probably the successors of the King's daughters who originally tended the fire on the royal hearth; if they let the fire go out, they were beaten; chosen as small girls, they served for 30 years, during which time they had to remain chaste.
See FOUNDING OF ROME; HEARTH.

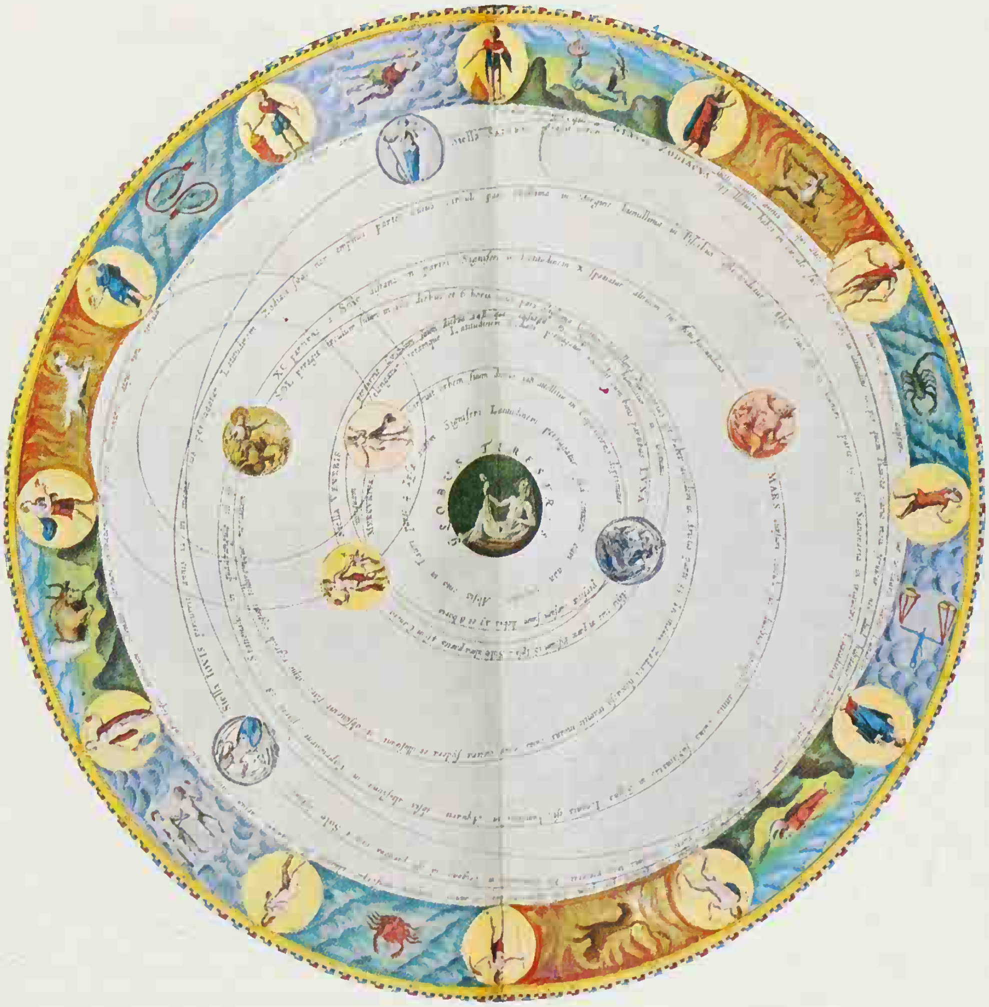
That our lives are influenced by mysterious universal vibrations has become a common notion, largely based on the taking over into occultism and astrology of theories drawn from 19th century science

VIBRATION

IN THE PAST a few rationalists have gone so far as to allege that all those who claimed to have experienced 'occult phenomena' were, quite literally, mad. Today, few would openly admit to such an extreme point of view, but it is true that occultists and schizophrenics have always shared a tendency to attempt to explain the interior experiences they have undergone in terms of the generally accepted beliefs of the societies in which they lived. Thus in the 17th and 18th centuries a schizophrenic would usually attribute his peculiar mental state either to the activities of spirits and witches or to the punishment of a jealous Calvinistic deity.

With the decline of popular belief in witchcraft such rationalizations were replaced by others of a more 'scientific' type, and the schizophrenic tended to blame his condition on the activities of evilly disposed individuals broadcasting 'death rays' or mysterious 'telepathic radiations'. The recent occult revival has brought signs of a reversion to earlier modes of explanation and a surprisingly large number of seriously disturbed patients in mental hospitals claim to be the victims of either black magic or 'astral attacks'.

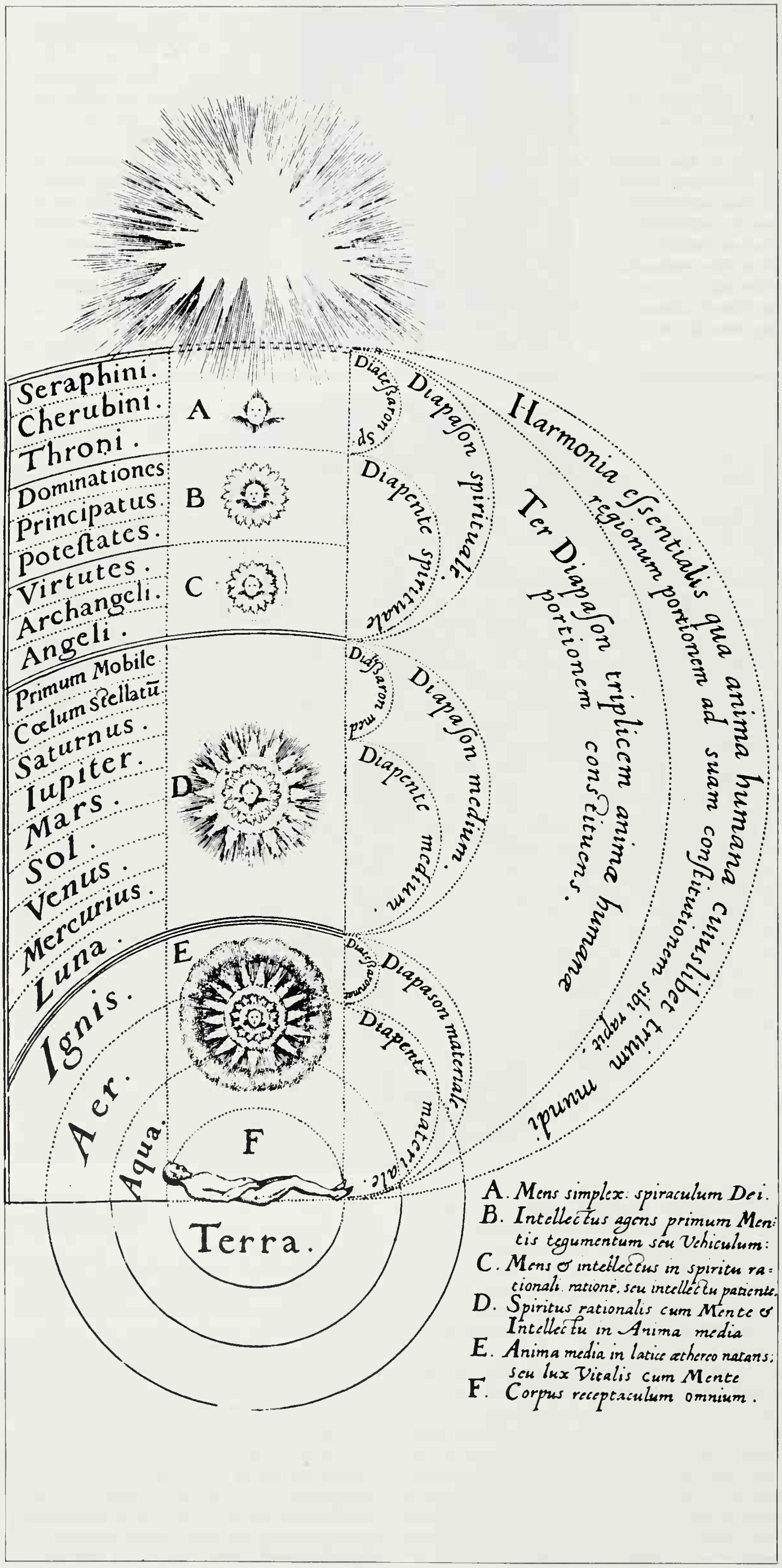
Like the schizophrenic, the occultist of the last century attempted to explain his beliefs and experiences in the light of the science of his own day; the astral light of Eliphas Levi, for example, showed much more resemblance to the luminiferous ether of 19th century physics than to the astral light of Paracelsus. Similarly, the prominence which the concept of vibration assumed in the occult theorizing of the last quarter of the 19th century owed much to the importance of vibrational frequency in the wave theory of light. Spiritualists took over the idea and explained the invisibility of the spirit world (supposed to interpenetrate the ordinary world of matter) to ordinary individuals as being the result of varying 'rates of vibration'. Mediums, so it was claimed, were those who were able partially to adjust their vibrational rates to those of the spirit world.



'The universe visible to man can be likened to a web of tiny interlacing octaves of vibrations': one source of this analogy is the old Pythagorean theory of the 'music of the spheres', that the motions of the heavenly bodies create a harmony of musical sounds; 17th century diagram of the planetary spheres

Madame Blavatsky and her theosophical following were particularly prone to use vibration as an explanation of supernormal events; indeed they seem to have seen it as the bridge which would eventually link up the dogmas of the physicists with their own syncretistic brand of oriental occultism (see BLAVATSKY; THEOSOPHY). They held that there existed a mysterious 'inter-etheric force' which could be controlled by the use of the vibrations of sound and would ultimately provide mankind with a free source of energy, enabling a complete control over its physical environment.

The theosophists seem to have derived this idea from a charlatan named John Worrell Keely, 'inventor' of the notorious Keely motor, of which its creator wrote: 'In the conception of any machine heretofore constructed, the medium for inducing a neutral centre has never been found. If it had, the difficulties of perpetual-motion seekers would have ended, and this problem would have become an established and operating fact. It would only require an introductory


Seraphini.
Cherubini.
Throni.
Dominationes
Principatus.
Poteſtates.
Virtutes.
Archangeli.
Angeli.
Primum Mobile
Cœlum Stellatũ
Saturnus.
Iupiter.
Mars.
Sol.
Venus.
Mercurius.
Luna.
Ignis.
Aer.
Aqua.
Terra.
A
B
C
D
E
F
Diateſſaron ſs
Diapaſon spirituale.
Diapente spirituale
Diateſſaron mdu
Diapaſon medium.
Diapente medium.
Diateſſaron materiale
Diapason materiale
Diapente materiale
Harmonia eſsentialis qua anima humana cuiuslibet trium mundi regionum portionem ad suam conſtitutionem sibi rapit.
Ter Diapaſon triplicem anima humana portionem conſtituens.
A. Mens simplex: spiraculum Dei.
B. Intellectus agens primum Mentis tegumentum seu Vehiculum:
C. Mens & intellectus in spiritu rationali ratione. seu intellectu patiente.
D. Spiritus rationalis cum Mente & Intellectu in Anima media
E. Anima media in latice æthereo natans; seu lux Vitalis cum Mente
F. Corpus receptaculum omnium.

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impulse of a few pounds, on such a device, to cause it to run for centuries. In the conception of my vibratory engine, I did not seek to attain perpetual motion but a circuit is formed that actually has a neutral centre, which is in a condition to be vivified by my vibratory ether, and, while under operation by said substance, is really a machine that is virtually independent of the mass (or globe), and it is the wonderful velocity of the vibratory circuit which makes it so. Still, with all its perfection, it requires to be fed with the vibratory ether to make it an independent motor . . .'

Madame Blavatsky appears to have been much impressed by Keely. In the *Secret Doctrine* she referred to him as 'a natural-born magician' and quoted with approval a description of him as being 'great . . . in soul, wise . . . in mind, and sublime . . . in courage . . . the greatest discoverer and inventor in the world . . .' He was, in reality, a fraud who managed for many years to enjoy a comfortable existence on the money he had extracted from those gullible enough to invest in his 'Vibrational Self-Motor'. After his death it was discovered that the working model of his motor which, seemingly set in motion by the vibration of a violin string, had so impressed visitors to his laboratory was in reality powered by a secret supply of compressed air. In spite of this fiasco theosophists and other occultists continued to attach great importance to 'vibrational energy', and to the Keely motor; even today there are those who defend Keely as a great occultist and physicist.

Music of the Universe

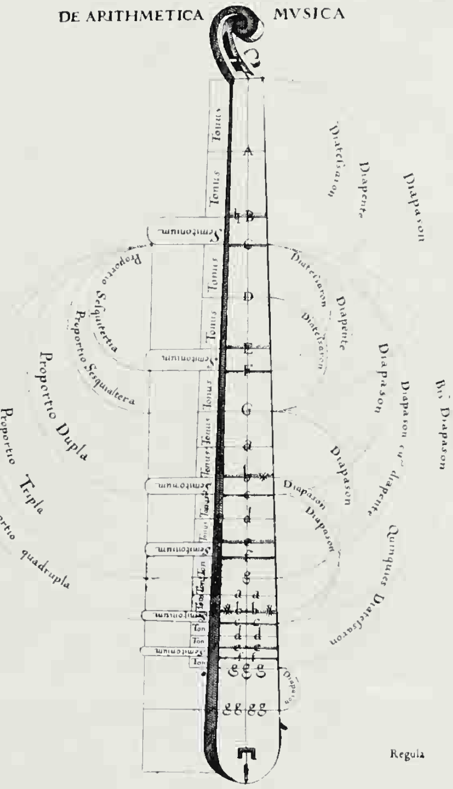
In the present century vibration has ceased to occupy an important place in the theoretical framework of most occult systems and its place has been taken by other, more fashionable, scientific (or pseudo-scientific) concepts. Thus some 19th century astrologers attempted to provide a rationale for their art by arguing that each planet had its own vibrational frequency which, transmitted by radiation through the ether, blended with the vibrations of the other planets to influence the child at birth; today such theories have been largely abandoned by astrologers in favour of Jungian 'synchronicity' – the belief that everything done at a certain moment of time has the qualities of that moment of time.

Nevertheless, vibrational theories have survived, and indeed have been developed much further in attempts to provide a semi-physical explanation for the phenomena of dowsing and radiesthesia (see DOWSING; RADIESTHESIA). Such explanations often involve a belief that the vibrational frequencies of the ordinary musical scale have an occult significance of cosmic importance. Dr H. Tomlinson, an Australian radiesthetic and homoeopathic practitioner, has claimed that: '. . . the notes of the tonic sol-fa system are a universal constant . . . The universe visible to man can be likened to a web of tiny interlacing octaves of vibrations. These octaves are of two sorts, ascending and descending. A descending octave is progress from matter of higher vibrating rate to matter of lower vibratory rate . . . An ascending octave is progress from denser matter to more spiritual matter . . . The diviner . . . is operating in a web of interlacing celestial octaves . . . Every substance, when tested by radiesthetic methods, can be found to react to one of the notes of the octave . . .'

On the whole, those who follow what has sometimes been called the Western Esoteric Tradition – largely MacGregor Mathers's personal synthesis of the Christian Cabala, occidental ritual magic and certain elements derived from Madame Blavatsky's theosophy – are not particularly concerned with such semi-physical, semi-spiritual theories of vibration, for in the Cabalistic doctrines regarding emanation they have available to them a much more sophisticated conceptual framework (see CABALA; GOLDEN DAWN). Western occultists have, however, been concerned with vibration as a mode of pronunciation, used as a means of inducing religious ecstasy. In an unpublished Golden Dawn document written by Wynn Westcott *c* 1893 four modes of spiritual development are described; one of these is 'the procuring of the influence of Divine Powers through the peculiar modes taught in our Order of Vibrating the Divine Names'.

This method of vibration was described in detail in the second part of another Golden Dawn document, *Flying Roll XII*:

> In vibrating the Divine Names the Operator should first of all rise as high as possible towards the idea of the Divine White Brilliance, keeping the mind raised to the plane of the loftiest spiritual aspiration. Unless this is done, it is dangerous to vibrate only with the astral forces, because the vibration attracts a certain force to the operator, and the nature of the force attracted rests largely on the condition of mind in which the operator is.
>
> The ordinary mode of vibrating is as follows: Take a deep and full inspiration and concentrate your consciousness in your heart, which answers to Tiphareth. (Having first, as already said, ascended to your Kether, you should endeavour to bring down the white Brilliance into you heart, prior to centering your consciousness there).
>
> Then formulate the letters of the Name required in your heart, in white, and feel them written there. Be sure to formulate the letters in brilliant white light, not merely in dull whiteness as the colour of the Apas Tattwa. Then, emitting the breath, slowly pronounce the Letters so that the sound vibrates within you, and imagine that the breath, while quitting the body, swells you so as to fill up space. Pronounce the Name as if you were vibrating it through the whole Universe, and as if it did not stop until it reached the further limits.
>
> All practical work which is of any use, tires the operator or withdraws some magnetism, and therefore, if you wish to do anything that is at all important, you must be in perfect magnetic and nervous condition, or else you will do evil instead of good.
>
> When you are using a Name and drawing a Sigil from the Rose, you must remember that the Sephira to which the Rose and the Cross are referred, is Tiphareth, whose position answers to the position of the heart, as if the Rose were therein. It is not always necessary to formulate before you in space the telesmatic angelic figure of the Name. As a general rule, pronounce the Names as many times as there are letters in it.



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Two diagrams from *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* by Robert Fludd, concerned with the universe as a harmony of musical vibrations
Left The relationship of the harmonies and notes of a monochord *Above* The different spheres which make up the macrocosm are shown to produce a universal harmony

From this brief instruction it is not clear whether the magicians of the early Golden Dawn regarded the vibrations they created as physical, mental or spiritual. Probably they were supposed to partake of all three. In any case it seems likely that each practitioner had his or her own private interpretation of the vibratory process.

Trembling With Energy

Certainly at the present day, those occultists who are devotees of either the original Golden Dawn magical system or of one or other of its many derivatives – mostly greatly inferior to the original – give widely varying descriptions of both what is actually done and what is subjectively experienced when a Divine Name is vibrated. The best descriptions – which ultimately seem to derive from Aleister Crowley (see CROWLEY) – take it for granted that the experiences undergone are subjective in nature but that, nevertheless, a *psychologically* real vibration is felt. One occultist has described himself as having his consciousness so filled with the spiritual essence of the Divine Name he is vibrating that not only his body but 'the universe itself seems to be shaking, trembling and vibrating with the energy of the God-name invoked'.

In the sense that the word vibration is interpreted by contemporary Western magicians its use is likely to continue. It seems at least possible, however, that the semi-physical theories of vibration associated with radiesthesia will slowly die out and that practitioners of radionics will turn towards a more traditional terminology and philosophy in future attempts to explain their science.

(See also NAMES.)

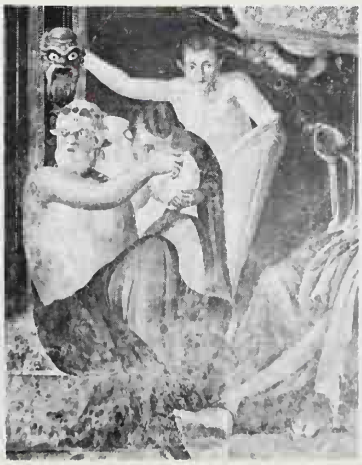
FRANCIS KING

FURTHER READING: H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Theosophical Publishing House, 1980); S. L. MacGregor Mathers, *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic and Alchemy* (Spearman, London, 1971).

Tate Gallery

Vigil

A watch by night: in early Christianity, a service celebrated during the night before a festival, surviving in the midnight Mass on Christmas Eve; later, the eve of a festival; a candidate for knighthood would keep a night's vigil of prayer and dedication in a church before being initiated.



Mansell Collection

Villa of the Mysteries

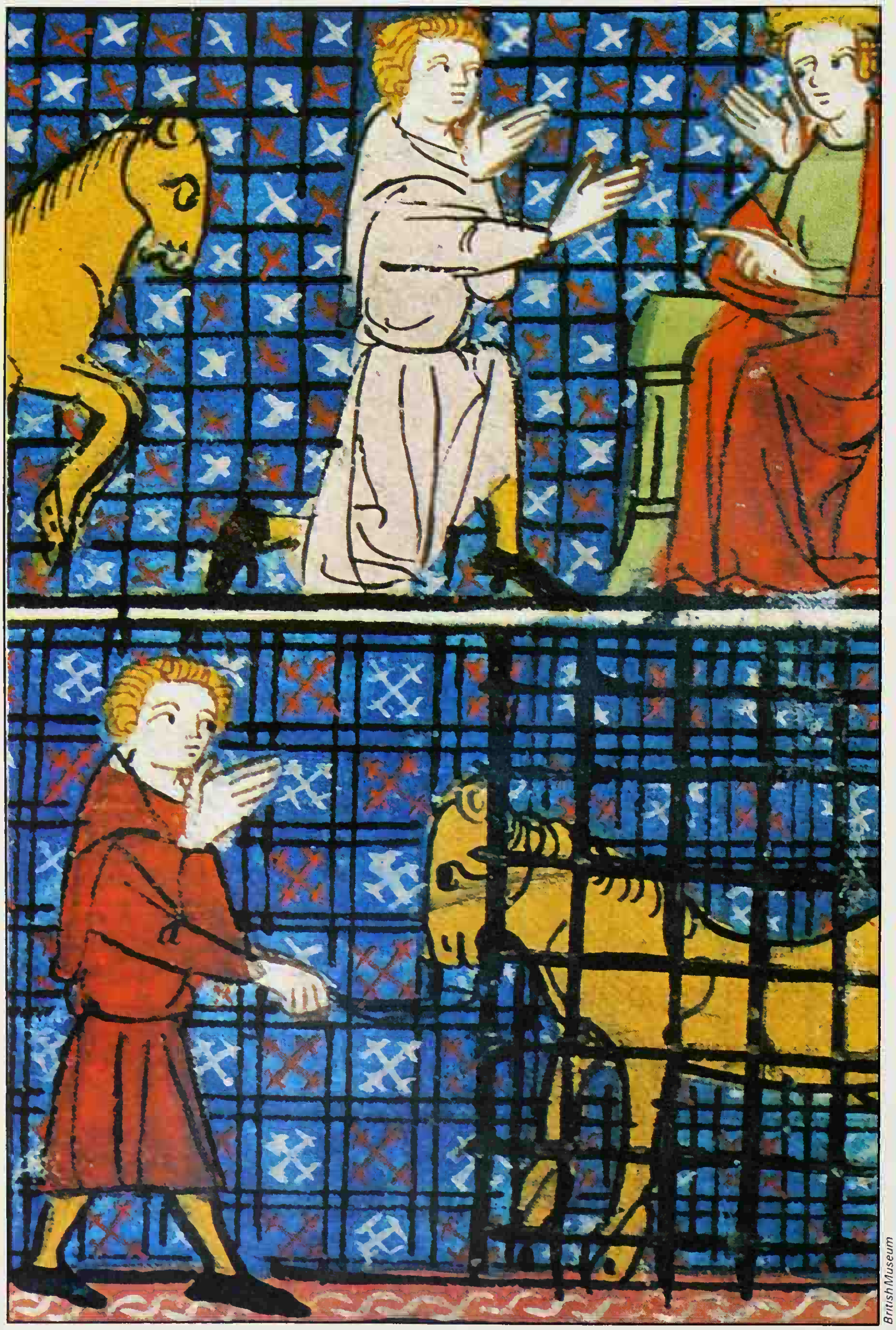
Cult centre of Dionysus at Pompeii, the town which was overwhelmed by eruptions of Vesuvius in 63 and 79 AD; murals depict the rituals of the cult.
See DIONYSUS.

Vine

Through its connection with intoxicating wine, often linked with life-energy and a state of closeness to the divine: plant of Dionysus as god of wine; in the Old Testament God's people are the vine which he brought out of Egypt and tended (Psalm 80, Isaiah, chapter 5); Jesus said, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser . . . I am the vine, you are the branches' (John, chapter 15).
See DIONYSUS; SYMBOLISM.

Virgil

Publius Vergilius Maro (70–19 BC), author of the *Aeneid*, the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*; in the Middle Ages his fourth eclogue, predicting the birth of a child who would usher in a new Golden Age, was taken to refer to Christ, and in legend he became a master magician; he guides Dante through the afterworld in the *Divine Comedy*.



British Museum

'There are not many pre-Christian stories of virgin births, and there are perhaps none in which virginity is the main point'

VIRGIN BIRTHS

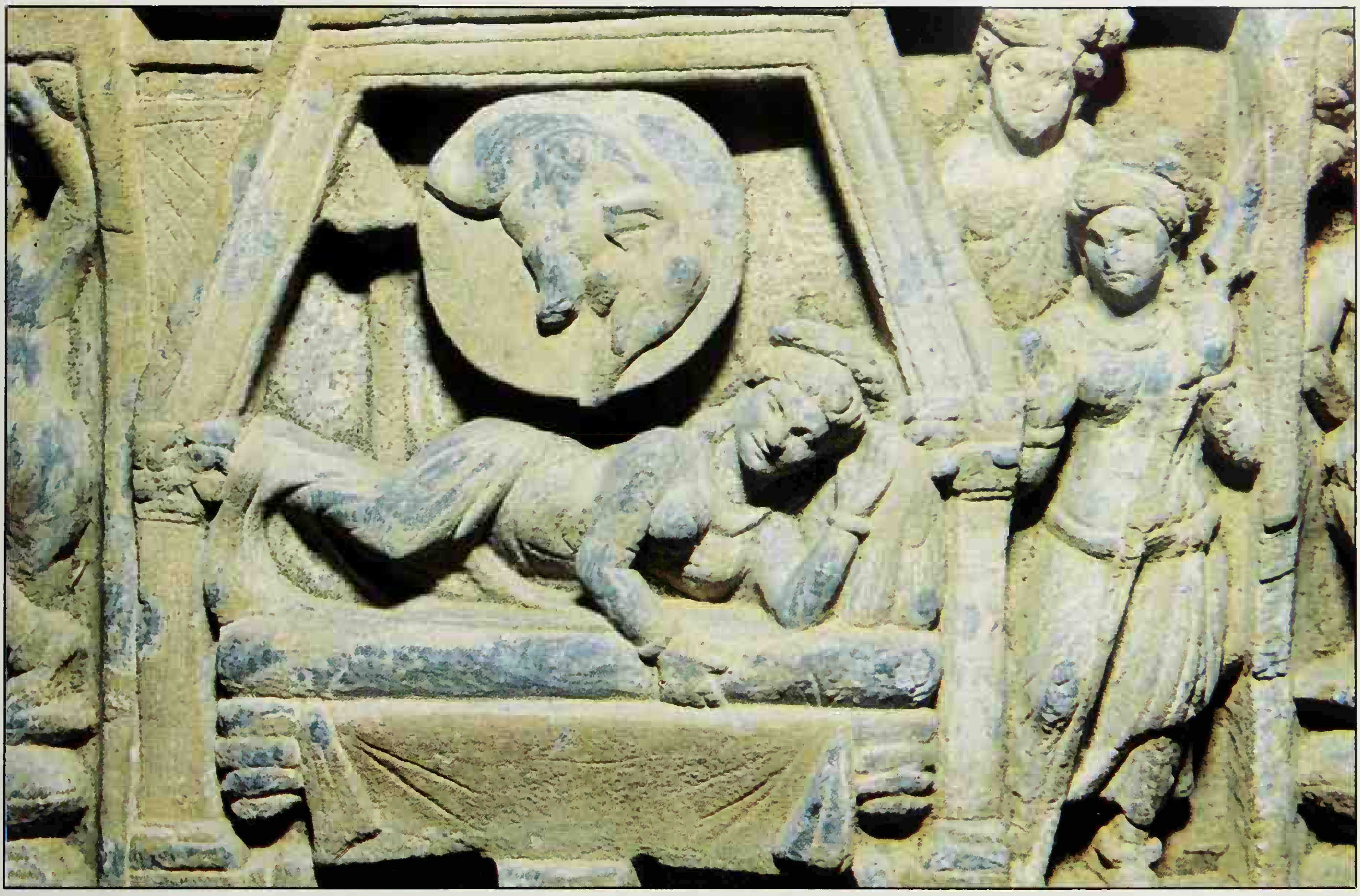
WHEREVER CHRISTIANITY is the official religion, the phrase 'virgin birth' carries a special meaning. It does not refer to a theme of myth or folklore, or to a biological hypothesis, but to a single, unique event: the birth of Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary. Jesus's miraculous origin, setting him apart from the rest of mankind, has seldom been publicly questioned by professed Christians until fairly recent years.

Of the four canonical gospels, only Matthew and Luke contain a birth narrative; no clear allusions to any such narrative occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The scriptural basis of the Virgin Birth doctrine is confined to Matthew 1. 18–25 and Luke 1. 26–38. Other accounts are given in apocryphal writings, but the Church rejected these as devoid of authority.

Matthew relates that Mary, when engaged to her future husband Joseph, was found to be pregnant. Joseph planned to proceed with the marriage and divorce her quietly afterwards. But an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to keep her as his wife. Her child was not due to any sexual union, but to divine action, immaterial and mysterious: 'that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit'. Luke gives Mary's side of the story. Before the events recorded in Matthew, the angel Gabriel came to her at Nazareth and prophesied that she would bear the promised Messiah. She protested that she was a virgin. Gabriel replied that God alone was responsible for what would happen and Mary consented to her destiny.

Virgin birth is often alleged to be a recurrent theme in mythology, so that material for comparison should be plentiful. Objective study, however, has been rare. Most

'Divine parentage was claimed for famous men, well into historical times': Alexander the Great was said to have been born to Olympias, Philip of Macedon's wife, after Zeus embraced her in the form of a serpent; 14th century miniature of Alexander with his horse Bucephalus


C. M. Dixon

writers who accept the Christian dogma discuss it in isolation. Conversely, writers on comparative religion tend to hunt out 'parallels' that are not parallel, and distort the facts in the process.

Actually there are not many pre-Christian stories of virgin births, and there are perhaps none in which virginity is the main point. Goddesses occasionally conceive without male assistance. The Great Mother of the ancient Mediterranean world may have initiated life in this way. Certainly Neith, an Egyptian form of the Great Mother, gives birth to the sun god Re by her own power. In a much later age the divine Sophia (Wisdom) of Gnosticism was regarded, by some, as a virgin-mother. One gnostic sect even gave her a child named Jesus. But here Christian influence is apparent, and in any case this 'Jesus' is another spiritual entity, not a human one; the birth does not take place in the world we know.

Impregnation by a Flower

When we descend to that world, we do not find a distinct 'virgin birth' motif before Christianity. What we do find is an 'abnormal impregnation' motif. A woman is said to have achieved motherhood in some extraordinary way. She may or may not have been a virgin, usually not, but it is seldom of any consequence to the story.

Such legends fall into two classes. The first is the more important – the 'divine begetting' type of legend, which confers honour on a hero by making out that his father was a god. Sometimes the deity appears to the future mother in his own person, taking a shape, generally but not always human, which permits sexual intercourse. This is a popular Hindu theme. Several heroes in the epic *Mahabharata* are the sons of gods who came to their mothers undisguised. Or the god may impersonate a mortal – the woman's husband, for instance, as when Zeus fathers Hercules by assuming the likeness of Amphitryon (see HERCULES). Or the god may cause pregnancy by a means which is not frankly sexual but remains material, as when Zeus enters Danae in a shower of gold.

Other religious leaders besides Christ have been credited with miraculous births. The conception of the Buddha was immaculate, although his mother was not a virgin but a married woman: Queen Maya dreams that the Buddha enters her womb as a little white elephant

Divine parentage was claimed for famous men well into historical times. Pythagoras and Plato were allegedly sons of Apollo. Alexander the Great was born to Olympias, Philip of Macedon's wife, after Zeus embraced her in the form of a serpent. An Indian legend tells more cryptically how Buddha projected himself into the womb of Maya, his chosen earthly mother, and she dreamed that she conceived a white elephant (see GAUTAMA). The story exists in several versions, some of which add fantastic details, but there is no claim that Maya was a virgin. Like the mothers of most of the other famous men, she lived as a married woman in normal relations with a husband.

The second, more primitive type of legend concerns pregnancies induced by magic. Here the father is apt to be secondary, or wholly absent, and the stress is on the magic. The remote inspiration of all such tales is to be sought in an early phase of society when conception was imperfectly understood, and the sexual act was not recognized as the cause, or as the sole cause. Generation might be ascribed to the wind, to certain foods, to unseen spirits. Even when the process was better grasped, magical objects or substances might still be used to make women bear children.

Stories reflecting this naive state of mind are numerous. Sometimes the heroine conceives when a man looks at her. More often she does it alone, through swallowing a pebble, a blade of grass or some other potent object. Fo-hi, the legendary founder of the Chinese Empire, was conceived by a girl who ate a flower which clung to her garment as she bathed. In such tales there is no working of divine power, no miracle in the religious sense. Impregnation occurs by material means; only the means are nonsexual, and probably suggested by ancient misinformation. Virginity, even when it is part of the story (as it is with Fo-hi), is incidental.

The orthodox Christian statement is that Jesus, an historical person, was conceived through a divinely-ordained exception to the laws of Nature. God's Holy Spirit caused an embryo to exist in Mary's womb. The gospels – though, unavoidably, they use sexual metaphors – do not describe a physical act or a material means; and the virginity is crucial. To equate what happens with the various 'divine begettings' is to obscure a profound difference of idea.

Christ's Family Tree

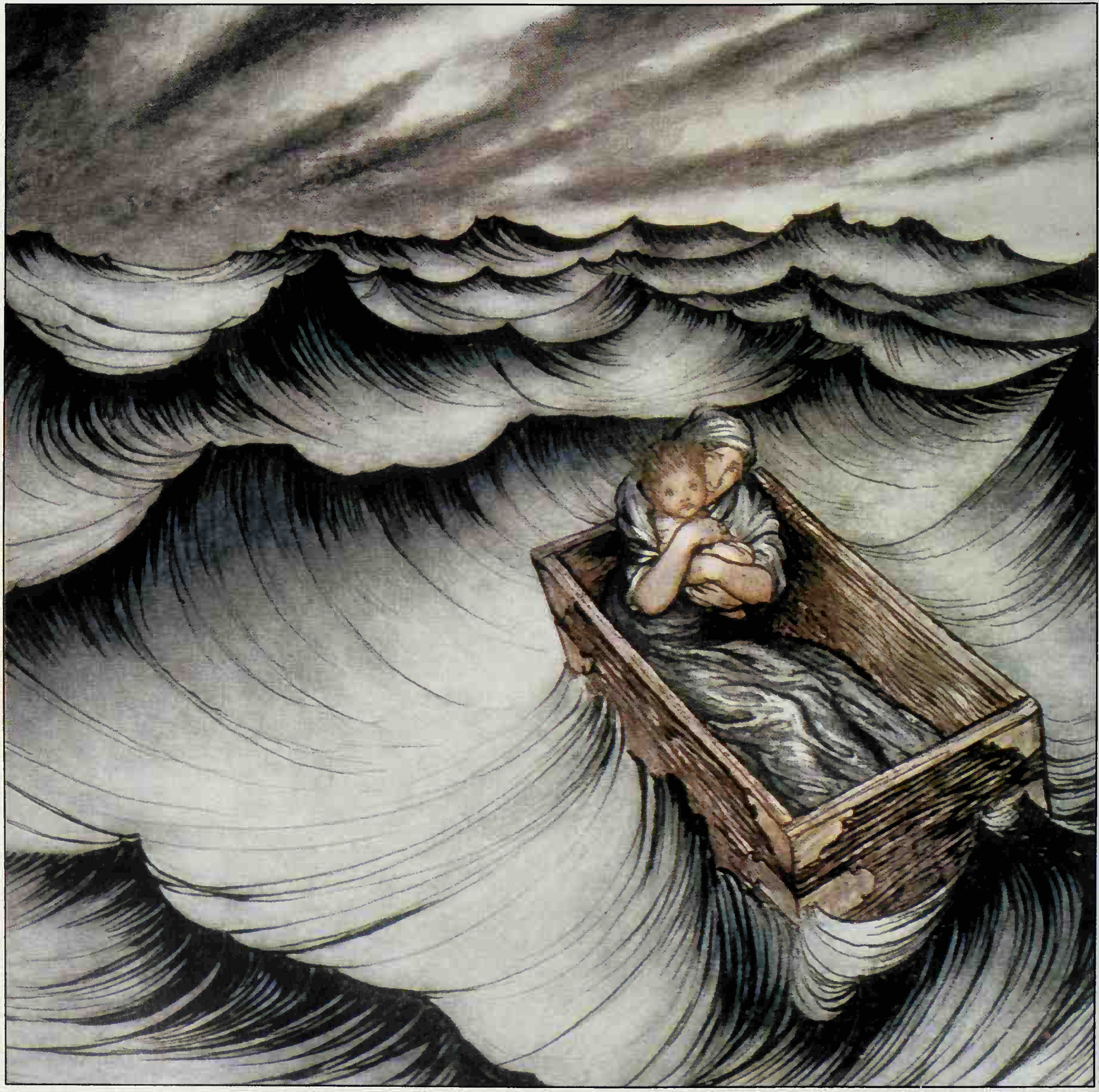
Nor are the origins of the story at all obvious. Theories of a gradual growth of legend, long after everyone who knew the truth was dead, are hard to sustain. The gospels of Matthew and Luke were composed within the lifetime of many of Christ's younger contemporaries. The two narratives are different, but not contradictory. Both seem to reflect an early and widespread belief.

Biblical scholars have claimed to detect a contrast in style between the opening passages of Luke and the rest. This could suggest interpolation, but it could also suggest that the author incorporated a memoir by someone close to Mary herself.

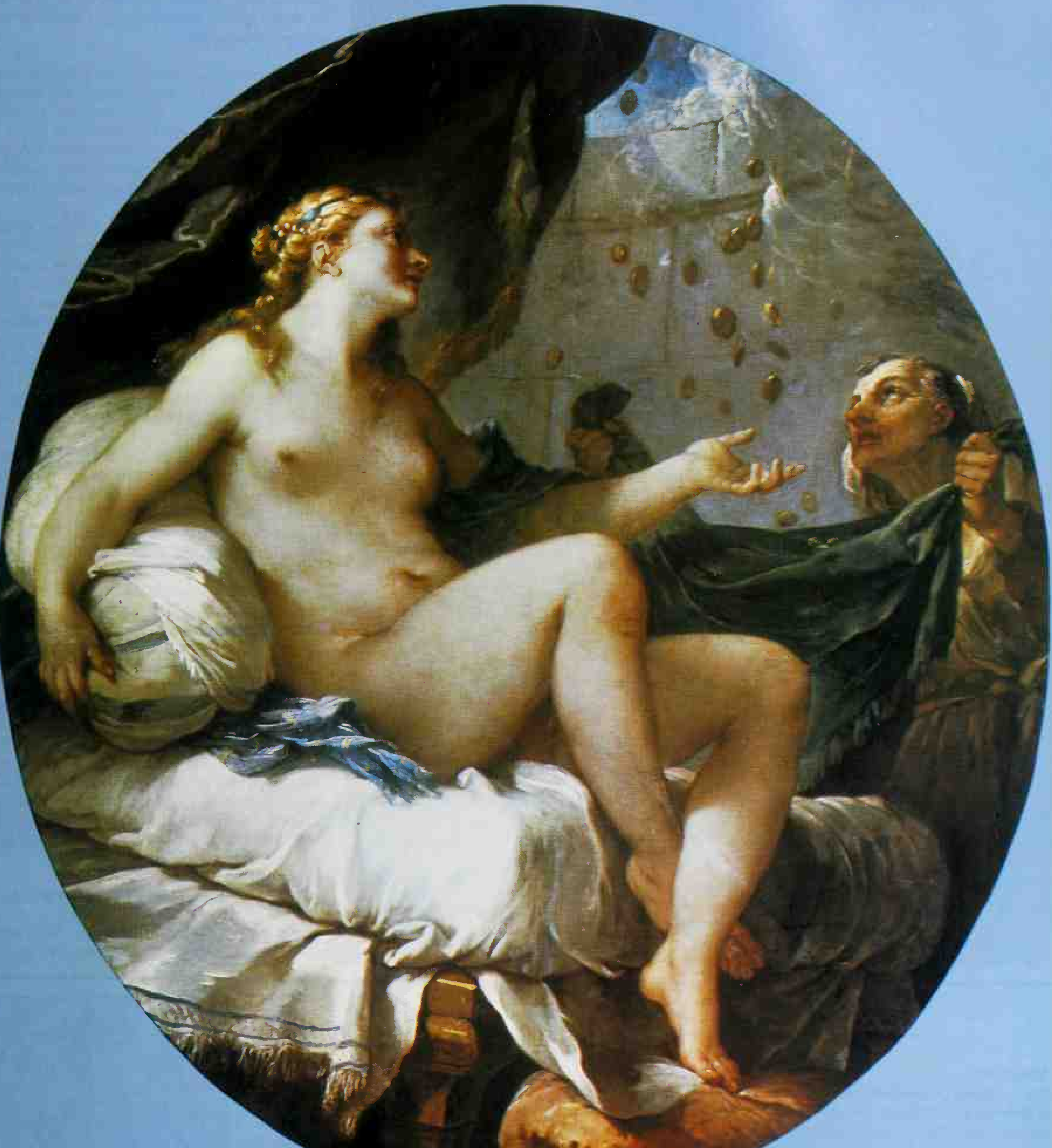
The strongest counter-argument is that the two genealogies, Matthew 1. 1–16, and Luke 3. 23–38, tracing Jesus's descent from David through Joseph, his nominal father, would be pointless if Joseph were not his true father; so that their Christian compilers must have thought he was. But this does not follow. The relations with Joseph would have established the legal Davidic lineage which was a mark of the Messiah, even if it were only adoptive. Here for once a pre-Christian case is helpful: Alexander's being the son of Zeus did not prevent his being counted also as a descendant of Hercules through Philip. Joseph's status as an adoptive parent is likewise enough to account for the references to him in the gospels as the father of Jesus.

The Virgin Birth seems, then, to have been a Christian tenet well before the close of the 1st century AD. There is no reliable trace of its being challenged as an innovation, except by one sect, the Ebionites (see EBIONITES). Nor is there any trace of

Divine parentage was claimed for many heroes of legend. Perseus was the son of the supreme god Zeus, who visited his mother Danae in the form of a shower of gold: painting by Charles Natoire (*right*). It was prophesied that the child would kill his grandfather, so Danae and the young Perseus were put into a chest and cast adrift: drawing by Arthur Rackham (*below*)



Chris Barker



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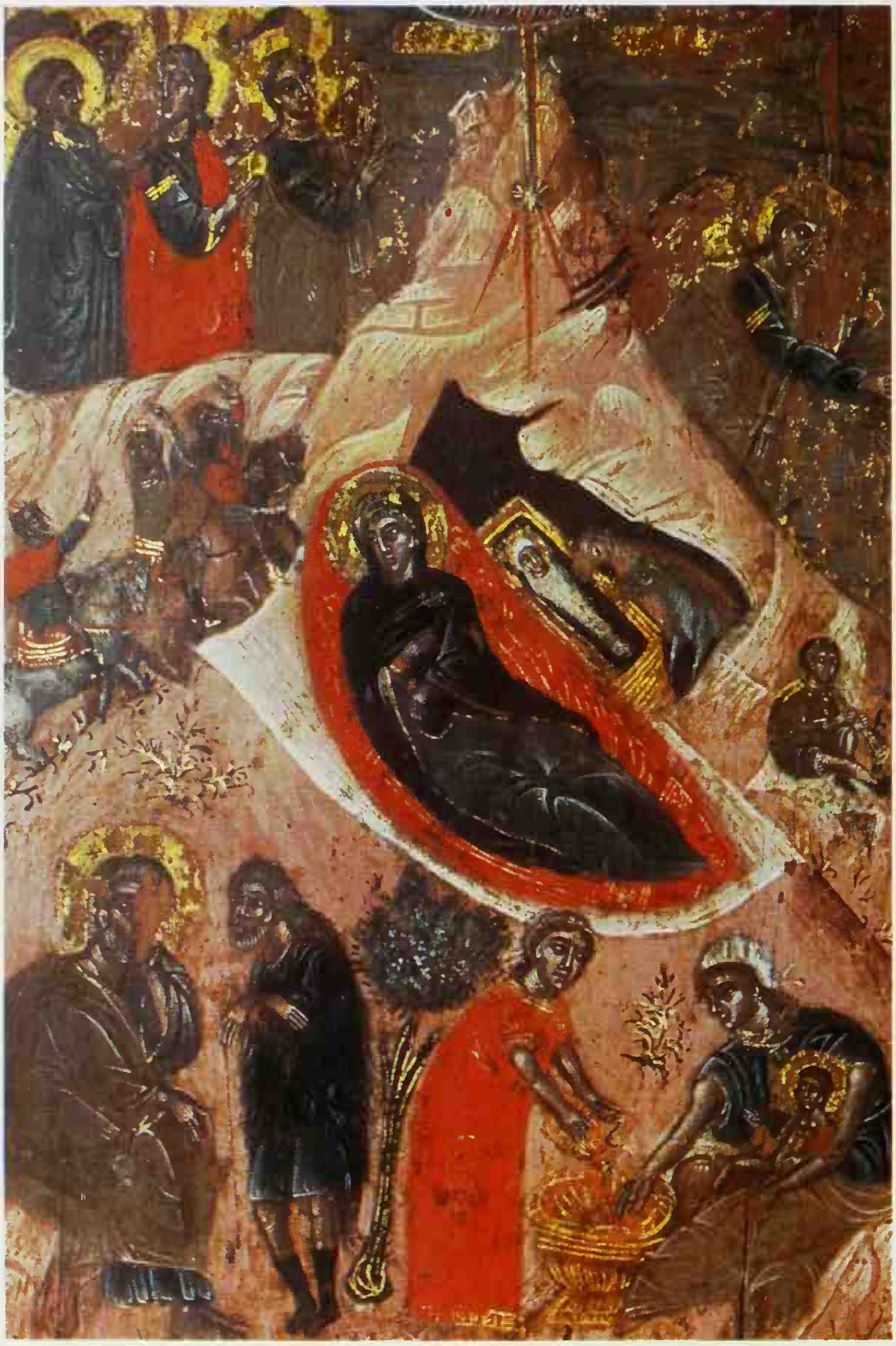

Ikon illustrating the story of Christ's nativity, from the Church of the Virgin at Potamies, Crete. The belief that Jesus was born of a virgin as a result of divine action was accepted by the Church well before the end of the 1st century AD; earlier, non-Christian accounts of divine births generally do not claim that the mother was a virgin

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a rival tradition outside the Church. Jews said that Jesus was conceived through Mary's misconduct; but since they gave her seducer's name as Pantheros – which is variously spelt and corrupted, but originally merely an anagram of *parthenos*, 'virgin' – the rumour is a scandal without historical substance (see JESUS).

Catholic tradition adds that Mary stayed a virgin always, with Joseph living in voluntary celibacy, accepting that she belonged to no man. If she did, several references to Jesus's 'brothers' in the Bible and in the historian Josephus have to be explained away. The vagueness of relation-words among Jews at that time would allow the 'brothers' to be cousins. But an established Christian belief in Mary's perpetual virginity is hard to trace in the early centuries, though several Fathers of the Church endorse it. Misunderstanding of the further dogma of the Immaculate Conception (which states that Mary was conceived sinless, as the chosen and predestined vessel) has fostered a mistaken notion that she too, in Catholic belief, was born of a virgin. This is an error.

Queries have been raised as to whether the Virgin Birth might have happened without a miracle. Parthenogenesis in mammals is not impossible. It has been induced in rabbits, though all the offspring were female. Cases are cited of women conceiving after bathing in the same water as a man; and of a twin being 'born' as an embryo inside the other twin and eventually expelled. If a rationalization of the Christian story is wanted, it could be argued that Jesus was the child of an abnormal pregnancy sincerely regarded as miraculous, and that this helped to invest him with a supernatural aura. But such a theory cannot be more than speculative.

(See also MARY.)

GEOFFREY ASHE

FURTHER READING: Thomas Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth* (S.C.M. Press, 1962).

Virginity

State valued in various religious and magical traditions, because it implies innocence, or concentration on spiritual things, or because it implies a reservoir of untapped force; the taking of a woman's virginity is frequently hedged about with taboos; in legend, only a virgin can tame a unicorn; objects used in ritual magic are required to be 'virgin'.

See RITUAL MAGIC; SELF-DENIAL; SEX; UNICORN; WOMAN.

Virgin Mary

The mother of Jesus; numerous legends grew up about her, and in popular Christian belief she was elevated to the level of a goddess; her cult demonstrates 'the importance of the female in the thought and feelings of ordinary people when expressed in religious faith and practice'.

See MARY; VIRGIN BIRTHS.